B E L I N D A.

BY

MARIA EDGEWORTH,

AUTHOR OF POPULAR TALES, CASTLE RACK-RENT, &c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

THIRD EDITION.

CORRECTED AND IMPROVED.

" A prudence undeceiving, undeceiv'd,
" That nor too little nor too much believ'd;
" That scorn'd unjust Suspicion's coward fear,
" And without weakness knew to be sincere."

Lord LYTTELTON'S *Monody on his Wife.*

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. JOHNSON AND CO.

ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD.

1811.

BELINDA.

CHAPTER XXIV.

PEU à PEU.

THINGS were in this situation, when, one day, Marriott made her appearance at her lady's toilette, with a face, which at once proclaimed, that something had discomposed her; and that she was impatient to be asked what it was.

"What *is* the matter, Marriott?" said lady Delacour; "for I know you want me to ask."

"Want you to ask! O dear, my lady, no!—for I'm sure, it's a thing that goes quite against me to tell; for I thought, indeed, my lady, *superiorly* of the person

in question; so much so, indeed, that I wished, what, I declare, I should now be ashamed to mention, especially in the presence of miss Portman, who deserves the best that this world can afford of every denomination. Well, ma'am, in one word," continued she, addressing herself to Belinda, "I am extremely rejoiced, that things are as they are, though I confess, that was not always my wish or opinion, for which I beg Mr. Vincent's pardon and yours; but I hope to be forgiven, since I'm now come entirely round to my lady Anne Percival's way of thinking, which I learnt, from good authority, at Oakly-park; and I am now convinced, and confident, miss Portman, that every thing is for the best."

"Marriott will inform us, in due course of time, what has thus suddenly and happily converted her," said lady Delacour to Belinda, who was thrown into some surprise and confusion by Marriott's address, but Marriott went on with much warmth—

"Dear me! I'm sure I thought we had

got rid of all double-dealers, when the house was cleared of Mr. Champfort; but, O mercy! there's not traps enough in the world for them all; I only wish they were all caught, as finely as some people were, in a trap t'other night—'Tis what all double-dealers, and Champfort at the head of the whole regiment, deserves; that's certain."

"We must take patience, my dear Belinda," said lady Delacour, calmly, "till Marriott has exhausted all the expletives in and out of the English language, and presently, when she has fought all her battles with Champfort over again, we may hope to get at the fact."

"Dear! my lady, it has nothing to do with Mr. Champfort, nor any such style of personage, I can assure you; for, I'm positive, I'd rather think contemptibly of a hundred million Mr. Champforts, than of one such gentleman as Mr. Clarence Hervey."

"Clarence Hervey!" exclaimed lady Delacour, taking it for granted, that Be-

linda blushed, though in fact she did not, her ladyship, with superfluous address, instantly turned, so as to hide her friend's face from Mrs. Marriott. "Well, Marriott, what of Mr. Hervey?"

"O! my lady, something you'll be surprised to hêar, and miss Portman too. It is not, by any means, that I am more of a prude than is becoming, my lady; nor, that I take upon me to be so innocent, as not to know, that young gentlemen of fortune will, if it be only for fashion's sake, have such things as kept mistresses, (begging pardon for mentioning such trash.) But no one, that has lived in the world, thinks any thing of that; except," added she, catching a glimpse of Belinda's countenance,—"except, to be sure, ma'am, morally speaking, it's very wicked and shocking, and makes one blush before company, till one's used to it, and ought certainly to be put down by act of parliament, ma'am; but, my lady, you know, in point of surprising any body, or being discreditable in a young gentleman

of Mr. Hervey's fortune and pretensions, it would be mere envy and scandal, to deem it any thing—worth mentioning."

"Then, for mercy's sake, or mine," said lady Delacour, "go on to something that *is* worth mentioning."

"Well, my lady, you must know, then, that yesterday I wanted some hempseed for my bullfinch—miss Helena's bullfinch, I mean; for it was she found it by accident, you know, miss Portman, the day after we came here: poor thing, it got itself so entangled in the net over the morello cherry tree, in the garden, that it could neither get itself in nor out, but very luckily, miss Helena saw it, and saved, and brought it in: it was almost dead, my lady."

"Was it?—I mean I am very sorry for it:—that is what you expect me to say. —Now, go on—get us once passed the bullfinch, or tell us what it has to do with Clarence Hervey."

"That is what I am aiming at, as fast

as possible, my lady.—So, I sent for some hempseed for the bullfinch, and along with the hempseed they brought me, wrapped round it, as it were, a printed handbill, as it might be, or advertisement, which I threw off, disregardingly, taking for granted, it might have been some of those advertisements for lozenges or razor-straps, that meet one wherever one goes; but miss Delacour picked it up, and found it was a kind of hue and cry after a stolen or strayed bullfinch. Ma'am, I was so provoked, I could have cried, when I learnt it was the exact description of our little Bobby to a feather—gray upon the back, and red on—"

"O! spare me the description to a feather.—Well, you took the bird, bull-finch, or Bobby, as you call it, home to it's rightful owner, I presume.—Let me get you so far on your way."

"No, I beg your pardon, my lady, that is not the thing."

"Then you did not take the bird home

to it's owner—and you are a bird-stealer? —With all my heart—be a dog-stealer, if you will—only go on."

"But, my lady, you hurry me so, it puts every thing topsyturvy in my head; I could tell it as fast as possible my own way."

"Do so, then."

"I was ready to cry, when I found our little Bobby was claimed from us, to be sure; but miss Delacour observed, that those, with whom it had lived till it was gray, must be sorrier still to part with it, so I resolved to do the honest and genteel thing by the lady who advertised for it, and to take it back myself, and to refuse the five guineas reward offered. The lady's name, according to the advertisement, was Ormond."

"Ormond!" repeated lady Delacour, looking eagerly at Belinda; "was not that the name sir Philip Baddely mentioned to us—you remember?"——

"Yes, Ormond was the name, as well as I recollect," said Belinda, with a de-

gree of steady composure, that provoked her ladyship.—"Go on, Marriott."

"And the words were, to leave the bird at a perfumer's in Twickenham, opposite to ——; but that's no matter.—Well, my lady, to the perfumer's I went with the bird, this morning. Now, I had my reasons for wishing to see this Mrs. Ormond myself, because, my lady, there was one thing rather remarkable about this bullfinch, that it sings a very particular tune, which I never heard any bullfinch, or any human creature sing any thing like before; so I determined, in my own cogitations, to ask this Mrs. Ormond to name the tunes her bullfinch could sing, before I produced it; and if she made no mention of it's knowing any one out of the common way, I resolved to keep my bird to myself, as I might very conscientiously and genteely too. So, my lady, when I got to the perfumer's, I inquired where Mrs Ormond was to be found? I was told, that she received no visits from any, at least from the female sex; and that I must

leave the bird there till called for. I was considering what to do, and the strangeness of the information made about the female sex, when in there came, into the shop, a gentleman, who saved me all the indelicacy of asking particulars. The bullfinch was at this time piping away at a fine rate, and, as luck would have it, that very remarkable strange tune that I mentioned to you.—Says the gentleman, as he came into the shop, fixing his eyes on the bullfinch as if they would have come fairly out of his head—'How did that bird come here?'—'I brought it here, sir,' said I. Then he began to offer me mountains of gold, in a very strange way, if I could tell him any tidings of the lady, to whom it belonged. The shopman, from behind the counter, now bent forward, and whispered the gentleman, that he could give him some information, if he would make it worth his while; and they both went together to a little parlour behind the shop, and I saw no more of them. But, my lady, very opportunely

for me, that was dying with curiosity, out of the parlour they turned a young woman in, to attend the shop, who proved to be an acquaintance of mine, whom I had done some little favours to when in service in London.—And this young woman, when I told her my distress about the advertisement and the bullfinch, let me into the whole of the affair.—'Ma'am,' said she, 'all that is known about Mrs. Ormond, in this house, or any where else, is from me; so there was no occasion for turning me out of the parlour. I lived with Mrs. Ormond, ma'am,' says she, 'for half a year, in the very house she now occupies, and consequently nobody can be better informed than I am:'—to which I agreed. Then she told me, that the reason that Mrs. Ormond never saw any company of any sort was, because she is not fit to see company— proper company —for she's not a proper woman. She has a most beautiful young creature there, shut up, who has been seduced, and is now deserted in a most cruel manner by

a Mr. Hervey.' O, my lady! how the name struck upon my ear!—I hoped, however, it was not our Mr. Hervey, but it was the identical Mr. Clarence Hervey. I made the young woman describe him, for she had often and often seen him, when he visited the unfortunate creature; and the description could suit none but our Mr. Hervey; and besides, it put it beyond a doubt, she told me his linen was all marked C. H.—So our Mr. Hervey, ma'am," added Marriott, turning to Belinda, "it certainly proved to be, to my utter dismay and confusion."

"O, Marriott! my poor head!" exclaimed lady Delacour, starting from under her hands—"that cruel comb went at least half an inch into my head: heads have feeling as well as hearts, believe me." And, as she spoke, she snatched out the comb, with which Marriott had just fasten-up her hair, and flung it on a sofa, at some yards distance. Whilst Marriott went to fetch it, lady Delacour thought that Belinda would have time to recover from

that utter dismay and confusion, into which she hoped that she must now be thrown.—" Come, Marriott, make haste. I have done *you* at least a great favour, for you have all this hair to perform upon again, and you will have leisure to finish this story of yours—which, at all events, if it is not in any other respect wonderful, we must allow, is wonderfully long."

" Well, my lady, to be short, then—I was more curious than ever, when I heard all this, to hear more; and asked my friend, how she could ever think of staying in a house with ladies of such a description! Upon which she justified herself, by assuring me, upon her honour, that at first she believed the young lady was married privately to Mr. Hervey, for that a clergyman came in secret, and read prayers, and she verily believes, that the unfortunate young creature was deceived barbarously, and made to fancy herself married to all intents and purposes, till at once Mr. Hervey threw off the mask, and

left off visiting her, pretending a necessity to take a journey, and handing her over to that vile woman, that Mrs. Ormond, who bid her be comforted, and all the things that are said by such women, on such occasions, by all accounts. But the poor deluded young thing saw how it was now too plain, and she was ready to break her heart; but not in a violent, common sort of way, ma'am, but in silent grief, pining and drooping. My friend could not stand the sight, nor endure to look upon Mrs Ormond, now she knew what she was, and so she left the house, without giving any reason, immediately. I forgot to mention, that the unfortunate girl's maiden name was St. Pierre, my lady: but her christian name, which was rather an out o' the way name, I quite forget."

"No matter," said lady Delacour, "we can live without it; or we can imagine it."

"To be sure, I beg pardon, such sort of people's names can't be of any conse-

quence, and, I'm sure, I blame myself now for going to the house, after all I had heard."

"You did go to the house, then?"

"To my shame be it spoken; my curiosity got the better of me, and I went—but only on account of the bullfinch, in the eyes of the world. It was a great while before I could get in: but I was so firm, that I would not give up the bird to no one but the lady herself, that I got in at last. O! never did my eyes light upon so beautiful a creature, nor so graceful nor so innocent to look at!"—Belinda sighed—Marriott echoed the sigh, and continued: "She was by herself, and in tears, when I was shown in, ma'am, and she started as if she had never seen any body before in her life. But when she saw the bullfinch, ma'am, she clapped her hands, and, smiling through her tears like a child, she ran up to me, and thanked me again and again, kissing the bird between times, and putting it into her bosom. Well, I declare, if she had talked to all-

eternity, she could never have made me pity her half so much as all this did, for it looked so much like innocence. I'm sure, nobody that was not—or, at least, that did not think themselves innocent, could have such ways, and such an innocent affection for a little bird. Not but what I know, ladies of a certain descrption often have birds; but, then, their fondness is all affectation and fashion; but this poor thing was all nature. Ah! poor unfortunate girl, thought I—but it's no matter what I thought now," said Marriott, shutting her eyes, to hide the tears that came into them at this instant; "I was ashamed of myself, when I saw Mrs. Ormond just then come into the room, which made me recollect what sort of company I was in. La! my lady, how I detested the sight of her! She looked at me, too, more like a dragon than any thing else; though in a civil way, and as if she was frightened out of her wits, she asked miss St. Pierre, as she called her, how I had got in, (in a whisper), and she made

all sort of signs afterward to her, to go out of the room. Never having been in such a situation before, I was quite robbed of all fluency, and could not,—what with the anger I felt for the one, and sorrow for the other,—get out a word of common sense, or even recollect what pretence brought me into the room, till the bir very luckily put it into my head, by b ginning to sing: so, then, I asked, whethe they could certify it to be theirs by an particular tune of it's own? 'O! yes, said miss St. Pierre; and she sung th very same tune. I never heard so swee a voice; but, poor thing, something came across her mind in the middle of it, and she stopped; but she thanked me again for bringing back the bird, which, she said, had been hers for a great many years, and that she loved it dearly. I stood, I believe, like one stupified, till I was roused by *the woman's* offering to put the five guineas reward, mentioned in the advertisement, into my hand. The touch of her gold made me start, as if it had been a

snake, and I pushed it from me; and when she pressed it again, I threw it on the table, scarce knowing what I did; and just then, in her iniquitous hand, I saw a letter, directed to Clarence Hervey, esq. O! how I hated the sight of his name, and every thing belonging to him, ma'am, at that minute. I'm sure, I could not have kept myself from saying something quite outrageous, if I had not taken myself out of the house, as I did, that instant.

"When there are women enough born and bred good for nothing—and ladies enough to flirt with, that would desire no better, that a gentleman like Mr. Clarence Hervey, ma'am, should set his wits, as one may say, to be the ruin of such a sweet innocent looking young creature; and then desert her in that barbarous way, after bringing a clergyman to deceive her with the mock ceremony, and all—O! there is no fashion, nor nothing can countenance such wickedness! 'tis the worst of wickedness and cruelty—and I shall think and say so to the latest hour of my life."

"Well said, Marriott," cried lady Delacour.

"I always thought, that Marriott had a great deal of true spirit and feeling," said Belinda.

"And now you know the reason, ma'am," added Marriott, "that I said, I was glad *things are as they are.* To be sure, I and every body once thought—but that's all over now—and I am glad *things are as they are.*"

Lady Delacour once more turned her quick eyes upon Belinda, and was much pleased to see, that she seemed to sympathize with Marriott's indignation.

In the evening, when they were alone, lady Delacour touched upon the subject again, and observed, that as they should now, in all probability, see Mr. Hervey in a few days, they might be able to form a better judgment of this affair, which she doubted not had been exaggerated. "You should judge from the whole of Clarence's conduct and character, and not

from any particular part," said her ladyship. "Do not his letters breathe a spirit of generosity?"

"But," interrupted miss Portman, "I am not called upon to judge of Mr. Hervey's whole conduct and character, nor of any part of it; his letters and his generosity are nothing——"

"To you?" said lady Delacour, with a smile.

"This is no time, and no subject for raillery, my dear friend," said Belinda; "you assured me, and I believed you, that the idea of Mr. Hervey's return was entirely out of the question, when you prevailed upon me to delay my journey to Oakly-park. As I now understand, that your ladyship has changed your mind, I must request your ladyship will permit me——"

"I will permit you to do what you please, dearest Belinda, except to *call me your ladyship*, twice in one sentence. You shall go to Oakly-park the day after to

morrow: will that content you, my dear? I admire your strength of mind—you are much fitter to conduct yourself, than I am to conduct you. I have done with raillery—my first, my only object, is your happiness—I respect and esteem as much as I love you, and I love you better than any thing upon Earth—power excepted, you will say—power not excepted, believe me; and if you are one of those strange people, that cannot believe without proof, you shall have proof positive upon the spot," added she, ringing the bell as she spoke. "I will no longer contend for power over your mind, with your friend at Oakly-park. I will give orders, in your presence, to Marriott, to prepare for our march—I did not call it retreat; but there is nothing shows so much generalship as a good retreat, unless it be a great victory. I am, I confess, rather prejudiced in favour of victory."

"So am I," said Belinda, with a smile "I am so strongly prejudiced in favour of

victory, that rather than obtain no other, I would even be content with a victory over myself."

Scarcely had Belinda pronounced these words, when lord Delacour, who had dined in town, entered the room, accompanied by Mr. Vincent.

"Give me leave, lady Delacour, to introduce to you," said his lordship, "a young gentleman, who has a great, and, I am sure, a most disinterested desire to cultivate your ladyship's further acquaintance."

Lady Delacour received him with all the politeness imaginable; and even her prepossessions in favour of Clarence Hervey could not prevent her from being struck with his appearance. "Il à infiniment l'air d'un héros de roman," thought she, and Belinda is not quite so great a philosopher as I imagined. In due time her ladyship recollected, that she had orders to give to Marriott about her journey, that made it absolutely necessary she should

leave miss Portman to entertain Mr. Vincent, "if possible, without her," for a few minutes; and lord Delacour departed, contenting himself with the usual excuse of —*letters to write.*

"I ought to be delighted with your gallantry, Mr. Vincent," said Belinda, "in travelling so many miles, to remind me of my promise about Oakly-park; but, on the contrary, I am sorry you have taken so much unnecessary trouble: lady Delacour is, at this instant, preparing for our journey to Mr. Percival's. We intend to set out the day after to morrow."

"I am heartily glad of it—I shall be infinitely overpaid for my journey, by having the pleasure of going back with you."

After some conversation upon different subjects, Mr. Vincent, with an air of frankness which was peculiarly pleasing to Belinda, put into her hands an anonymous letter, which he had received the preceding day.

"It is not worth your reading," said he; "but I know you too well to fear that it should give you any pain; and I hope you know me too well, to apprehend that it could make any impression on my mind."

Belinda read with some surprise.

"Rash young man! beware of connecting yourself with the lady, to whom you have lately been drawn in to pay your addresses. She is the most artful of women. She has been educated, as you may find upon inquiry, by one, whose successful trade it has been, to draw in young men of fortune for her nieces, whence she has obtained the appellation of *the matchmaker general.* The only niece, whom she could not get rid of any other way, she sent to the most dissipated and unprincipled viscountess in town. The viscountess fell sick, and, as it was universally reported last winter, the young lady was, immediately upon her friend's death, to have been married to the viscount widower. But the viscountess

detected the connexion, and the young lady, to escape from her friend's rage, and from public shame, was obliged to retreat to certain shades in the neighbourhood of Harrowgate; where she passed herself for a saint upon those, who were too honourable themselves to be suspicious of others.

"At length the quarrel between her and the viscountess was made up, by her address and boldness, in declaring, that if she was not recalled, she would divulge some secrets respecting a certain *mysterious boudoir* in her ladyship's house. This threat terrified the viscountess, who sent off express for her late discarded humble companion. The quarrel was hushed up, and the young lady is now with her noble friend at Twickenham. The person, who used to be let up the private stairs, into the boudoir, by Mrs Marriott, is now more conveniently received at Twickenham."

Much more was said by the letter-writer,

in the same strain. The name of Clarence Hervey, in the last page, caught Belinda's eye; and with a trepidation, which she did not feel at the beginning of this epistle she read the conclusion.

"The viscount is not supposed to have been unrivalled in the young lady's favour. A young gentleman, of large fortune, great talents, and uncommon powers of pleasing, has, for some months, been her secret object; but he has been prudent enough to escape her matrimonial snares, though he carries on a correspondence with her, through the means of her friend the viscountess, to whom he privately writes. The noble lady has bargained to make over to her confidante all her interest in Hervey's heart. He is expected every day to return from his tour; and, if the schemes upon him can be brought to bear, the promised return to the neighbourhood of Harrowgate will never be thought of. Mr. Vincent will be left in the lurch; he will not even have the lady's fair hand— her *fair* heart is Clarence Hervey's, at all

events. Farther particulars shall be communicated to Mr. Vincent, if he pays due attention to this warning from

"A SINCERE FRIEND."

As soon as Belinda had finished this curious production, she thanked Mr. Vincent with more kindness than she had ever before shown him, for the confidence he placed in her, and for the openness with which he treated her. She begged his permission, to show this letter to lady Delacour, though he had previously dreaded the effect, which it might have upon her ladyship's feelings.

Her first exclamation was—"This is one of Harriet Freke's frolics;" but as her ladyship's indignation against Mrs. Freke had long since subsided into utter contempt, she did not waste another thought upon the writer of this horrible letter; but, instantly, the whole energy of her mind, and fire of her eloquence, burst forth in an eulogium upon her friend. Careless of all that concerned herself, she

explained, without a moment's hesitation, every thing that could exalt Belinda: she described all the difficult circumstances, in which her friend had been placed; she mentioned the secret with which she had been entrusted; the honour with which even at the hazard of her own reputation, she had kept her promise of secresy inviolable, when lord Delacour, in a fit of intoxication and jealousy, had endeavoured to wrest from Marriott the key of *the mysterious boudoir*. She confessed her own absurd jealousy, explained how it had been excited by the artifices of Champfort and sir Philip Baddely, how slight circumstances had worked her mind up almost to phrensy. "The temper the dignity, the gentleness, the humanity, with which Belinda bore with me, during this paroxysm of madness," said lady Delacour, "I never can forget; nor the spirit with which she left my house, when she saw me unworthy of her esteem, and ungrateful for her kindness; nor the magnanimity with which she returned to me,

when I thought myself upon my death-bed: all this has made an impression upon my soul, which never, whilst I have life and reason, can be effaced. She has saved my life. She has made my life worth saving. She has made me feel my own value. She has made me know my own happiness. She has reconciled me to my husband. She has united me with my child. She has been my guardian angel. —*She*, the confidante of my intrigues!—*she* leagued with me in vice!—No, I am bound to her by ties stronger than vice ever felt; than vice even in the utmost ingenuity of it's depravity, can devise."

Exhausted by the vehemence with which she had spoken, lady Delacour paused; but Vincent, who sympathised in her enthusiasm, kept his eyes fixed upon her, in hopes that she had yet more to say,——

"I might, perhaps, you will think," continued she, smiling, have spared you this history of myself, and of my own affairs, Mr. Vincent; but I thought it

necessary to tell you the plain facts, which malice has distorted into the most odious form. This is the quarrel, this is the reconciliation, of which your anonymous friend has been so well informed. Now, as to Clarence Hervey."

"I have explained to Mr. Vincent," interrupted Belinda, "every thing that he could wish to know on that subject, and I now wish you to tell him, that I faithfully remembered my promise to return to Oakly-park, and that we were actually preparing for the journey."——

"Look here, sir," cried lady Delacour, opening the door of her dressing-room, in which Marriott was upon her knees, locking a trunk; "here's dreadful note of preparation."

"You are a happier man than you yet know, Mr. Vincent," continued lady Delacour, "for I can tell you, that some persuasion, some raillery, and some wit, I flatter myself, have been used, to detain miss Portman from you."

"From Oakly-park," interrupted Belinda.

"From Oakly Park, *&c.*—a few days longer—Shall I be frank with you, Mr. Vincent?—Yes, for I cannot help it—I am not of the nature of anonymous letter-writers: I cannot, either secretly or publicly, sign or say myself a *sincere friend,* without being one to the utmost extent of my influence. I never give my vote without my interest, nor my interest without my vote. Now Clarence Hervey is my friend. Start not at all, sir,—you have no reason; for if he is my friend, miss Portman is yours. Which has the better bargain?—But as I was going to tell you Mr. Clarence Hervey is my friend, and I am his. My vote, interest, and influence, have consequently been all in his favour. I had reason to believe that he has long admired *the dignity of* miss Portman's *mind, and the simplicity of her character,*" continued her ladyship with an arch look at Belinda; "and though he was too much a man of genius, to begin with the present tense of the indicative

mood, 'I love,' yet I was, and am convinced, that he does love her."

"Can you, dear lady Delacour," cried Belinda, "speak in this manner, and recollect all we heard from Marriott this morning? And to what purpose all this?"

"To what purpose, my dear? To convince your friend, Mr. Vincent, that I am neither fool nor knave, but that I deal fairly by you, by him, and by all the world. Mr. Hervey's conduct towards miss Portman has, I acknowledge, sir, been undecided. Some circumstances have lately come to my knowledge, which throw doubts upon his honour and integrity:—doubts, which, I firmly believe, he will clear up to *my* satisfaction at least, as soon as I see him, or as soon as it is in his power; with this conviction, and believing as I do, that no man upon Earth is so well suited to my friend, pardon me, Mr. Vincent, if my wishes differ from yours: though my sincerity may give you present, it may save you from future, pain."

"Your ladyship's sincerity, whatever

pain it may give me, I admire," said Mr. Vincent, with some pride in his manner; "but I see, that I must despair of the honour of your ladyship's congratulations."

"Pardon me," interrupted lady Delacour; "there you are quite mistaken—the man of Belinda's choice *must* receive my congratulations—he must do more—he must become my friend. I would never rest till I had won his regard, nor should I in the least be apprehensive, that he would not have sufficient greatness of mind to forgive my having treated him with a degree of sincerity, which the common forms of politeness cannot justify, and at which common souls would be scandalized past recovery."

Mr. Vincent's pride was entirely vanquished by this speech; and with that frankness, by which his manners were usually characterized, he thanked her for having distinguished him from *common souls*; and assured her that such sincerity as hers was infinitely more to his taste, than that refined politeness, of which he was aware

no one was more perfect mistress than lady Delacour.

Here their conversation ended, and Mr. Vincent, as it was now late, took his leave.

"Really, my dear Belinda," said lady Delacour, when he was gone, "I am not surprised at your impatience to return to Oakly-park; I am not so partial to my knight, as to compare him, in personal accomplishments, with your hero. I acknowledge also, that there is something vastly prepossessing in the frankness of his manners; he has behaved admirably well, about this abominable letter; but, what is better than all in a lady's eyes, he is *éperdument amoureux.*"

"Not *éperdument*, I hope," said Belinda.

"Then, as you do not think it necessary for your hero to be *éperdument amoureux*, I presume," said lady Delacour, "you do not think it necessary, that a heroine should be in love at all. So love and marriage are to be separated by philosophy, as well as by fashion. This is

lady Anne Percival's doctrine? I give Mr. Percival joy. I remember the time, when he fancied love essential to happiness."

"I believe, he not only fancies, but is sure of it now, from experience:" said Belinda.

"Then he interdicts love only to his friends? He does not think it essential that you should know any thing about the matter. You may marry his ward, and welcome, without being in love with him."

"But not without loving him," said Belinda.

"I am not casuist enough in these matters to understand the subtle distinction you make, with the true Percival emphasis, between loving and falling in love. But I suppose I am to understand by loving, loving as half the world do when they marry."

"As it would be happy for half the world if they did,"—replied Belinda, mildly, but with a firmness of tone that

her ladyship felt—"I should despise myself and deserve no pity from any human being, if after all I have seen I could think of marrying for convenience or interest."

"O pardon me! I meant not to insinuate such an idea, even your worst enemy sir Philip Baddely would acquit you there. I meant but to hint my dear Belinda, that a heart such as yours is formed for love in it's highest, purest, happiest state."

A pause ensued—

"Such happiness can be secured only," resumed Belinda, "by a union with a man of sense and virtue."

"A man of sense and virtue I suppose means Mr. Vincent"—said lady Delacour, "no doubt you have lately learned in the same sober style, that a little love will suffice with a great deal of esteem."

"I hope I have learned lately, that a great deal of esteem is the best foundation for a great deal of love."

"Possibly," said lady Delacour, "but we often see people working at the foundation

all their lives without getting any farther."

"And those, who build their castles of happiness in the air," said Belinda, "are they more secure? wiser? or happier?"

"Wiser! I know nothing about that,"—said lady Delacour,—"but happier I do believe they are, for the castle building is always *a labour of love*, but the foundation drudgery is generally *love's labour lost*. Poor Vincent will find it so."

"Perhaps not"—said Belinda, "for already his solid good qualities—"

"Solid good qualities," interrupted lady Delacour, "I beg your pardon for interrupting you, but my dear you know we never fall in love with good qualities;—except, indeed, when they are joined to an aquiline nose—Oh! that aquiline nose of Mr. Vincent's! I am more afraid of it than of all his solid good qualities. He has again, I acknowledge it, much the advantage of Clarence Hervey in personal accomplishments. But you are not a woman to be decided by personal accomplishments."

"And you will not allow me to be decided by solid good qualities," said Belinda—"So by what must I be determined?"

"By your heart, my dear; by your heart: trust your heart only."

"Alas!" said Belinda, "how many, many women have deplored their having trusted to their hearts only."

"*Their* hearts—but I said *your* heart, mind your pronouns my dear, that makes all the difference. But to be serious, tell me do you really and *bona fide*, as my old uncle the lawyer used to say, love Mr. Vincent?"

"No"—said Belinda, "I do not love him yet."

"But for that emphatic *yet* how I should have worshipped you! I wish I could once clearly understand the state of your mind about Mr. Vincent, and then I should be able to judge how far I might indulge myself in raillery without being absolutely impertinent. So without intruding upon

your confidence tell me whatever you please."

"I will tell you all I know of my own mind,"—replied Belinda, looking up with an ingenuous countenance—"I esteem Mr. Vincent; I am grateful to him for the proofs he has given me of steady attachment, and of confidence in my integrity. I like his manners and the frankness of his temper; but I do not yet love him: and till I do no earthly consideration could prevail upon me to marry him."

"Perfectly satisfactory, my dear Belinda —And yet, I cannot be quite at ease, whilst Mr. Vincent is present, and my poor Clarence absent. Proximity is such a dangerous advantage even with the wisest of us. The absent lose favour so quickly in Cupid's court, as in all other courts, and they are such victims to false reports and vile slanderers!"

Belinda sighed—

"Thank you for that sigh my dear,"—said lady Delacour. "May I ask, would you, if you discovered that Mr.

Vincent had a Virginia, discard him for ever from your thoughts?"

"If I discovered that he had deceived and behaved dishonorably to any woman, I certainly should banish him for ever from my regard."

"With as much ease as you banished Clarence Hervey?"

"With more perhaps."

"Then you acknowledge—that's all I want—that you liked Clarence better than you do Vincent?"

"I acknowledge it,"—said Belinda colouring up to her temples—"But that time is entirely past, and I never look back to it."

"But if you were forced to look back to it, my dear, if Clarence Hervey proposed for you, would not you cast a lingering look behind?"

"Let me beg of you my dear lady Delacour, as my friend"—cried Belinda, speaking and looking with great earnestness—"Let me beg of you to forbear. Do not use your powerful influence over

my heart to make me think of what I ought not to think, or do what I ought not to do. I have permitted Mr. Vincent to address me. You cannot imagine, that I am so base as to treat him with duplicity, or that I consider him only as a pis-aller—No—I have treated, I will treat him honourably. He knows exactly the state of my mind. He shall have a fair trial whether he can win my love. The moment I am convinced that he cannot succeed, I will tell him so decidedly: but if ever I should feel for him, that affection, which is necessary for my happiness and his, I hope I shall without fear, even of lady Delacour's ridicule or displeasure, avow my sentiments and abide by my choice."

"My dear I admire you," said lady Delacour, "but I am incorrigible, I am not fit to hear myself convinced—After all I am impelled by the genius of imprudence to tell you, that in spite of Mr. Percival's cure for *first loves*, I consider love as a distemper that can be had but once."

"As you acknowledge that 'you are

not fit to hear yourself convinced," said Belinda, "I will not argue this point with you; but you will allow," added she, "as it is said or sung in Cupid's calendar, that

"Un peu d'amour, un peu de soin,
"Menent souvent un cœur bien loin."

Belinda broke off the conversation by singing that beautiful French air.

CHAPTER XXV.

LOVE ME, LOVE MY DOG.

THE only interest, that honest people can take in the fate of rogues, is in their detection and punishment; the reader then will be so far interested in the fate of Mr. Champfort as to feel some satisfaction at his being safely lodged in Newgate. The circumstance which led to this desirable catastrophe was the anonymous letter to Mr. Vincent. From the first moment that Marriott saw or heard of letter, she was convinced, she said, that "Mr. Champfort *was at the bottom of it.*" Lady Delacour was equally convinced, that Harriet Freke was the author of the epistle; and she supported her opinion, by observing, that Champfort could neither write nor spell English. Marriott and her

lady were both right. It was a joint, or rather a triplicate performance. Champfort, in conjunction with the stupid maid, furnished the intelligence, which Mrs. Freke manufactured; and when she had put the whole into proper style and form, Mr. Champfort got her rough draught fairly copied at his leisure, and transmitted his copy to Mr. Vincent. Now, all this was discovered by a very slight circumstance. The letter was copied by Mr Champfort upon a sheet of mourning paper, off which he thought that he had carefully cut the edges; but one bit of the black edge remained, which did not escape Marriott's scrutinizing eye. "Lord bless my stars, my lady!" she exclaimed, "this must be the paper; I mean may be the paper, that Mr. Champfort was cutting a quire of, the very day before miss Portman left town. It's a great while ago, but I remember it, as well as if it was yesterday; I saw a parcel of black jags of paper littering the place, and asked what had been going on? and was told, that it was only Mr. Champfort,

who had been cutting some paper, which to be sure I concluded my lord had given to him, having no farther occasion for; as my lord, and you my lady, were just going out of mourning at that time, as you may remember."

Lord Delacour, when the paper was shown to him, recognized it immediately by a private mark which he had put on the outside sheet of a division of letter paper, which, indeed, he had never given to Champfort, but which he had missed about the time Marriott mentioned. Between the leaves of this paper, his lordship had put, as it was often his practice, some bank notes. They were notes but of small value, and when he missed them, he was easily persuaded by Champfort, that as he had been much intoxicated the preceding night, he had thrown them away with some useless papers. He rummaged through his writing-desk in vain, and then gave up the search. It was true, that, on this very occasion, he gave Champfort the remainder of some mourning paper, which

he made no scruple, therefore, of producing openly. Certain that he could swear to his own private mark upon this paper, and that he could identify his notes, by their numbers, &c., of which he had luckily a memorandum, lord Delacour, enraged to find himself both robbed and duped by a favourite servant, in whom he had placed implicit confidence, was effectually roused from his natural indolence! he took such active and successful measures that Mr. Champfort was committed to gaol, to take his trial for the robbery. To make peace for himself, he confessed that he had been instigated by Mrs. Freke, to get the anonymous letter written. This lady was now suffering just punishment for her *frolics*, and lady Delacour thought her fallen so much below indignation, that she advised Belinda to take no manner of notice of her conduct, except simply returning the letter to her, with "miss Portman's, Mr. Vincent's, and lord and lady Delacour's compliments and thanks to *a sin-*

cere friend, who had been the means of bringing villainy to justice."

So much for Mrs. Freke and Mr. Champfort, who, both together, scarcely deserve an episode of ten lines.

Now to return to Mr. Vincent. Animated by fresh hope, he pressed his suit with Belinda with all the ardour of his sanguine temper. Though little disposed to fear any future evil, especially in the midst of present felicity, yet he was aware of the danger that might ensue to him from Clarence Hervey's arrival; he was therefore impatient for the intermediate day to pass, and it was with heartfelt joy, that he saw the carriages at last at the door, which were actually to convey them to Oakly-park. Mr. Vincent, who had all the West Indian love for magnificence, had, upon this occasion, an extremely handsome equipage. Lady Delacour, though she was disappointed by Clarence Hervey's not appearing, did not attempt to delay their departure. She contented herself

with leaving a note, to be delivered to him on his arrival, which, she still flattered herself, would induce him immediately to go to Harrowgate. The trunks were fastened upon the carriages, the imperial was carrying out, Marriott was full of a world of business, lord Delacour was looking at his horses as usual, Helena was patting Mr. Vincent's great dog, and Belinda was rallying her lover, upon his taste for "the pomp, pride, and circumstance" of glorious travelling--

When an express arrived from Oakly-park. It was to delay their journey for a few weeks. Mr. Percival and lady Anne wrote word, that they were unexpectedly called from home, by ——. Lady Delacour did not stay to read by what, or by whom, she was so much delighted by this reprieve. Mr. Vincent bore the disappointment as well as could be expected; particularly when Belinda observed, to comfort him, that "the mind is it's own place;" and that hers, she believed, would be the same at Twickenham as at Oakly-

park. Nor did *she* give him any reason to regret that she was not immediately under the influence of his own friends. The dread of being unduly biassed by lady Delacour, and the strong desire Belinda felt to act honourably by Mr. Vincent, to show him that she was not trifling with his happiness, and that she was incapable of the meanness of retaining a lover as a *pis aller*; were motives which acted more powerfully in his favour, than all that even lady Anne Percival could have looked or said. The contrast between the openness and decision of his conduct towards her, and Clarence Hervey's vacillation and mystery; the belief, that Mr. Hervey was, or ought to be, attached to another woman; the conviction, that Mr. Vincent was strongly attached to her, and that he possessed many of the good qualities essential to her happiness, operated every day more and more strongly upon Belinda's mind.

Where was Clarence Hervey all this

time? lady Delacour, alas! could not divine. She every morning was certain, that he would appear that day, and every night she was forced to acknowledge her mistake. No inquiries—and she had made all that could be made, by address and perseverance—no inquiries could clear up the mystery of Virginia and Mrs. Ormond, and her impatience to see her friend Clarence every hour increased. She was divided between her confidence in him, and her affection for Belinda; unwilling to give him up, yet afraid to injure her happiness, or to offend her, by injudicious advice, and improper interference. One thing kept lady Delacour for some time in spirits—miss Portman's assurances, that she would not bind herself by any promise, or engagement, to Mr. Vincent, even when decided in his favour; and that she should hold both him and herself perfectly free, till they were actually married. This was according to lady Anne and Mr. Percival's principles; and lady Delacour was never

tired of expressing directly, or indirectly, her admiration of the prudence and propriety of their doctrine.

Lady Delacour recollected her own promise, to give her *sincere congratulatious to the victorious knight*; and she endeavoured to treat Mr. Vincent with impartiality. She was however now still less inclined to like him, from a discovery, which she accidentally made, of his being still upon good terms with *odious Mrs. Luttridge*. Helena, one morning, was playing with Mr. Vincent's large dog, of which he was excessively fond. It was called Juba, after his faithful servant.

"Helena, my dear," said lady Delacour, "take care! don't trust your hand in that creature's monstrous mouth."

"I can assure your ladyship," cried Mr. Vincent, "that he is the very quietest and best creature in the world."

"No doubt," said Belinda, smiling, "since he belongs to you; for you know,

as Mr. Percival tells you, every thing animate or inanimate, that is under your protection, you think must be the best of it's kind in the universe."

"But really, Juba *is* the best creature in the world," repeated Mr. Vincent, with great eagerness —"Juba is, without exception, the best creature in the universe."

"Juba, the dog, or Juba, the man?" said Belinda: "you know, they cannot be both the best creatures in the universe."

"Well! Juba, the man, is the best man—and Juba, the dog, is the best dog, in the universe," said Mr. Vincent, laughing, with his usual candour, at his own foible, when it was pointed out to him— "But, seriously, lady Delacour, you need not be in the least afraid to trust miss Delacour with this poor fellow; for, do you know, during a whole month, that I lent him to Mrs. Luttridge, at Harrowgate, she used constantly to let him sleep in the room with her; and now, whenever he sees her, he licks her hand, as gently as if he were

a lapdog; and it was but yesterday, when I had him there, she declared, he was more gentle than any lapdog in London."

At the name of Luttridge lady Delacour changed countenance, and she continued silent for some time. Mr. Vincent, attributing her sudden seriousness to dislike or fear of his dog, took him out of the room.

"My dear lady Delacour," said Belinda, observing that she still retained an air of displeasure, "I hope your antipathy to *odious Mrs. Luttridge* does not extend to every body who visits her."

"Tout au contraire," cried lady Delacour, starting from her reverie, and assuming a playful manner: "I have made a general gaol delivery of all my old hatreds; and even odious Mrs Luttridge, though a hardened offender, must be included in this act of grace; so you need not fear that Mr. Vincent should fall under my royal displeasure, for consorting with this state criminal. Though I can't sympathise with him, I forgive him, both for liking that great dog, and that little woman; espe-

cially, as I shrewdly suspect, that he likes the lady's E O table better than the lady."

"E O table; Good Heavens! You do not imagine that Mr. Vincent——"

"Nay, my dear, don't look so terribly alarmed! I assure you, I did not mean to hint, that there was any serious, *improper* attachment to the E O table; only a little flirtation, perhaps, to which his passion for you has, doubtless, put a stop."

"I'll ask him the moment I see him," cried Belinda, "if he is fond of play; I know he used to play at billiards at Oakly-park, but merely as an amusement. Games of address, as Mr. Percival says, are not to be put upon a footing with games of hazard."

"A man may, however, contrive to lose a good deal of money at billiards, as poor lord Delacour can tell you. But I beseech you, my dear, do not betray me to Mr. Vincent; ten to one I am mistaken, for his great dog put me out of humour—"

"But with such a doubt upon my mind, unsatisfied——"

"It shall be satisfied; lord Delacour shall make inquiries for me.—Lord Delacour *shall* make inquiries, did I say?—*will*, I should have said. If Champfort had heard me, to what excellent account he might have turned that unlucky *shall*. What a nice grammarian a woman had need to be, who would live well with a husband inferiour to her in understanding! With a superiour or an equal, she might use *shall* and *will* as inaccurately as she pleases. Glorious privilege! How I shall envy it you, my dear Belinda! But how can you ever hope to enjoy it? Where is your superiour? Where is your equal?"

Mr. Vincent, who had by this time seen his dog fed, which was one of his daily pleasures, returned, and politely assured lady Delacour, that Juba should not again intrude. To make her peace with Mr. Vincent, and to drive the E O table from Belinda's thoughts, her ladyship now turned the conversation from Juba, the dog, to Juba, the man. She talked of Harriot Freke's phosphoric

Obeah woman, of whom, she said, she had heard an account from miss Portman. She spoke of Juba's marriage, and of his master's generosity to him. From thence she went on to the African slave trade, by way of contrast, and she finished precisely where she had intended, and where Mr. Vincent could have wished, by praising a poem called 'The dying Negro,' which he had, the preceding evening, brought to read to Belinda. This praise was peculiarly agreeable, because he was not perfectly sure of his own critical judgment, and his knowledge of English literature was not as extensive as Clarence Hervey's; a circumstance, which lady Delacour had discovered one morning, when they went to see Pope's famous villa at Twickenham. Flattered by her present confirmation of his taste, Mr. Vincent readily complied with a request to read the poem to Belinda; they were all deeply engaged by the charms of poetry, when they were suddenly interrupted by the entrance of—Clarence Hervey!

The book dropped from Vincent's hand, the instant that he heard his name. Lady Delacour's eyes sparkled with joy. Belinda's colour rose, but her countenance maintained an expression of calm dignity. Mr. Hervey, upon his first entrance, appeared prepared to support an air of philosophic composure, which forsook him before he had walked across the room. He seemed overpowered by the kindness, with which lady Delacour received him—struck by the reserve of Belinda's manner—but not surprised, or displeased, at the sight of Mr. Vincent. On the contrary, he desired immediately to be introduced to him, with the air of a man resolute to cultivate his friendship. Provoked and perplexed, lady Delacour, in a tone of mingled reproach and astonishment, exclaimed—" Though you have not done me the honour, Mr. Hervey, to take any other notice of my last letter, I am to understand, I presume, by the manner in which you desired me to introduce you to

our friend, Mr Vincent, that it has been received."

"Received! good Heavens! Have not you had my answer!" cried Clarence Hervey, with a voice and look of extreme surprise and emotion! "Has not your ladyship received a packet?"

"I have had no packet!—I have had no letter!—Mr. Vincent, do me the favour to ring the bell," cried lady Delacour eagerly—"I'll know, this instant, what's become of it."

"Your ladyship must have thought me——," and, as he spoke, his eye involuntarily glanced towards Belinda.

"No matter what I thought you," cried lady Delacour, who forgave him every thing for this single glance—"if I did you a little injustice, Clarence, when I was angry, you must forgive me: for, I assure you, I do you a great deal of justice at other times."

"Did any letter, any packet, come here for me? Inquire, inquire," said she impatiently, to the servant who came

in. No letter or packet was to be heard of. It had been directed, Mr. Hervey now remembered, to her ladyship's house in town She gave orders to have it immediately sent for; but scarcely had she given them, when, turning to Mr. Hervey, she laughed and said——

"A very foolish compliment to you and your letter, for you certainly can speak as well as you can write; nay, better, I think—though you don't write ill, neither—but you can tell me, in two words, what in writing would take half a volume. Leave this gentleman and lady to—'The dying Negro;' and let me hear your two words in lord Delacour's dressing room, if you please," said she, opening the door of an adjoining apartment. "Lord Delacour will not be jealous if he find you tête-a-tête with me, I promise you. But you shall not be compelled. You look——"

"I look," said Mr. Hervey, affecting to laugh, "as if I felt the impossibility of putting half a volume into two words. It is a long story, and——"

"And I must wait for the packet, whether I will or no—well, be it so," said lady Delacour. Struck with the extreme perturbation into which he was thrown, she pressed him with no farther raillery, but instantly attempted to change the conversation to general subjects.

Again she had recourse to 'The dying Negro.' Mr. Vincent, to whom she now addressed herself, said, "for my part, I neither have, nor pretend to have, much critical taste; but I admire in this poem the manly, energetic spirit of virtue, which it breathes." From the poem, an easy transition was made to the author; and Clarence Hervey, exerting himself to join in the conversation, observed, "that this writer (Mr. Day) was an instance, that genuine eloquence must spring from the heart. Cicero was certainly right," continued he, addressing himself to Mr. Vincent, in his definition of a great orator, "to make it one of the first requisites, that he should be a good man."

Mr. Vincent coldly replied, "This definition would exclude too many men of superiour talents, to be easily admitted."

"Perhaps the appearance of virtue," said Belinda, "might, on many occasions, succeed, as well as reality."

"Yes, if the man be as good an actor as Mr. Hervey," said lady Delacour, "and if he suit 'the action to the word'—'the word to the action."

Belinda never raised her eyes whilst her ladyship uttered these words; Mr. Vincent was, or seemed to be, so deeply engaged in looking for something in the book, which he held in his hand, that he could take no farther part in the conversation; and a dead silence ensued.

Lady Delacour, who was naturally impatient in the extreme, especially in the vindication of her friends, could not bear to see, as she did by Belinda's countenance, that she had not forgotten Marriott's story of Virginia St. Pierre; and though her ladyship was convinced, that the *packet* would clear up all mysteries, yet she could

not endure, that even in the interim 'poor Clarence' should be unjustly suspected; nor could she refrain from trying an expedient, which just occurred to her, to satisfy herself and every body present. She was the first to break silence.

"To do ye justice, my friends, you are all good company this morning. Mr. Vincent is excusable, because he is in love; and Belinda is excusable, because—because—Mr. Hervey, pray help me to an excuse for miss Portman's stupidity, for I am dreadfully afraid of blundering out the truth. But why do I ask *you* to help me? In your present condition, you seem totally unable to help yourself.—Not a word!—Run over the commonplaces of conversation—weather—fashion—scandal—duels—deaths—marriages—Will none of these do? Suppose, then, you were to entertain me with other people's thoughts, since you have none of your own unpacked—Forfeit to arbitrary power," continued her ladyship, playfully seizing Mr. Vincent's book. "I have always observed,

that none submit with so good a grace to arbitrary power from our sex, as your true men of spirit, who would shed the last drop of their blood, to resist it from one of their own Inconsistent creatures, the best of you!—So read this charming little poem to us, Mr. Hervey, will you?"

He was going to begin immediately, but lady Delacour put her hand upon the book, and stopped him.

"Stay; though I am tyrannical, I will not be treacherous. I warn you, then, that I have imposed upon you a difficult, a dangerous task. If you have any 'sins unwhipt of justice,' there are lines which I defy you to read without faltering—Listen to the preface.

Her ladyship began as follows:

"Mr. Day, indeed, retained, during all the periods of his life, as might be expected from his character, a strong detestation of female seduction * * * * Happening to see some verses, written by a young lady, on a recent event of this na

ture, which was succeeded by a fatal catastrophe—the unhappy young woman, who had been a victim to the perfidy of a lover, overpowered by her sensibility of shame, having died of a broken heart—he addressed the fair poetess, in whose sentiments he sympathized, in the following manner.

Lady Delacour paused, and fixed her eyes upon Clarence Hervey. He, with all the appearance of conscious innocence, received the book, without hesitation, from her hands, and read aloud the lines, to which she pointed.

" Swear by the dread avengers of the tomb,
" By all thy hopes, by death's tremendous gloom,
" That, ne'er by thee deceiv'd, the tender maid
" Shall mourn her easy confidence betray'd,
" Nor weep in secret the triumphant art,
" With bitter anguish rankling in her heart;
" So may each blessing, which impartial fate
" Throws on the good, but snatches from the great,
" Adorn thy favour'd course with rays divine,
" And Heav'n's best gift, a virtuous love, be thine!"

Mr. Hervey read these lines with so much unaffected, unembarrassed energy, that lady Delacour could not help casting a triumphant look at Belinda, which said or seemed to say—

You see I was right in my opinion of Clarence!—

Belinda's countenance openly expressed satisfaction. That reserve, which had been retained, as long as she had any suspicion of his having acted dishonourably, was now dissipated, and her manner toward him totally changed. Had Mr. Vincent been left to his own observations, he would have seen the simple truth; but he was alarmed and deceived by lady Delacour's imprudent expressions of joy, and by the significant looks, that she gave her friend, miss Portman, which seemed to be *looks of mutual intelligence.* He scarcely dared to turn his eyes toward his mistress, or upon him, whom he thought his rival: but he kept them anxiously fixed upon her ladyship, in whose face, as in a glass,

he seemed to study every thing that was passing.

"Pray, have you ever played at chess, since we saw you last?" said lady Delacour to Clarence. "I hope you do not forget that you are *my knight*. I do not forget it, I assure you—I own you as my knight to all the world, in public and private—do not I, Belinda?"

A dark cloud overspread Mr. Vincent's brow—he listened not to Belinda's answer. Seized with a transport of jealousy, he darted at Mr. Hervey a glance of mingled scorn and rage; and, after saying a few unintelligible words to miss Portman and lady Delacour, he left the room.

Clarence Hervey, who seemed afraid to trust himself longer with Belinda, withdrew a few minutes afterward.

"My dear Belinda!" exclaimed lady Delacour, the moment that he was out of the room—"how glad I am he is gone, that I may say all the good I think of him. In the first place, Clarence Hervey loves you. Never was I so fully convinced

of it, as this day.—Why had not we that letter of his sooner?—That will explain all to us—but I ask for no explanation; I ask for no letter, to confirm my opinion, my conviction—that he *loves* you: on this point I *cannot* be mistaken: he fondly loves you."

"He fondly loves her;—Yes, to be sure, I could have told you that news long ago," cried the dowager lady Boucher, who was in the room before they were aware of her entrance; they had both been so eager, the one listening, and the other speaking.

"Fondly loves her!" repeated the dowager—"Yes; and no secret, I promise you, lady Delacour:"—and then, turning to Belinda, she began a congratulatory speech, upon the report of her approaching marriage with Mr. Vincent.—Belinda absolutely denied the truth of this report: but the dowager continued:—'I distress you, I see, and it's quite out of rule, I am sensible, to speak in this sort of way, miss Portman; but, as I'm an old acquaintance, and an old friend, and an old

woman, you'll excuse me. I can't help saying, I feel quite rejoiced at your meeting with such a match."—Belinda again attempted to declare, that she was not going to be married, but the invincible dowager went on; "every way eligible, and every way agreeable.—A charming young man, I hear, lady Delacour: I see I must only speak to you, or I shall make miss Portman sink to the centre of the Earth, which I would not wish to do, especially at such a critical moment as this. A charming young man! I hear, with a noble West Indian fortune, and a noble spirit, and well connected, and passionately in love—no wonder—But I have done now, I promise you; I'll ask no questions—so, don't run away, miss Portman; I'll ask no questions, I promise you."

To ensure the performance of the promise, lady Delacour asked, "What news there was in the world?" This question, she knew, would keep the dowager in delightful employment. "I live quite out

of the world here; but since lady Boucher has the charity to come to see me, we shall hear all the 'secrets worth knowing,' from the best authority."

"Then, the first piece of news, I have for you, is, that my lord and my lady Delacour are absolutely reconciled; and that they are the happiest couple that ever lived."

"All very true," replied lady Delacour.

"True!" repeated lady Boucher, "Why, my dear lady Delacour, you amaze me!—Are you in earnest?—Was there ever any thing so provoking?—There have I been contradicting the report, wherever I went, for I was convinced, that the whole story was a mistake, and a fabrication.

"The history of the reformation might not be exact, but the reformation itself your ladyship may depend upon, since you hear it from my own lips."

"Well, how amazing!—How incredible!—Lord bless me—but your ladyship certainly is not in earnest? for you look

just the same, and speak just in the same sort of way: I see no alteration, I confess."

"And what alteration, my good lady Boucher, did you expect to see? Did you think, that, by way of being exemplarily virtuous, I should like lady Q——, let my sentences come out of my mouth only at the rate of a word a minute? —Or did you expect, that, in hopes of being a pattern for the rising generation, I should hold my features in penance, immovably, thus—like some of the poor ladies of Antigua, who, after they have blistered their faces all over, to get a fine complexion, are forced, whilst the new skin is coming, to sit without speaking, smiling, or moving muscle or feature, lest an indelible wrinkle should be the consequence?"

Lady Boucher was impatient to have this speech finished, for she had a piece of news to tell. "Well!" cried she, "there's no knowing what to believe, or disbelieve, one hears so many strange reports: but I

have a piece of news for you, that you may all depend upon. I have one secret worth knowing, I can tell your ladyship —and one, your ladyship and miss Portman, I'm sure, will be rejoiced to hear. Your friend, Clarence Hervey, is going to be married."

"Married!—married!" cried lady Delacour.

"Ay, ay, your ladyship may look as much astonished as you please, you cannot be more so than I was, when I heard it. Clarence Hervey! miss Portman, that was looked upon so completely, you know, as not a marrying man: and now the last man upon Earth, that your ladyship would suspect of marrying in this sort of way!"

"In what sort of way?—My dear Belinda, how can you stand this fire!" said lady Delacour, placing a skreen dexterously, to hide her face from the dowager's observation.

"Now only guess, who he is going to

marry?" continued lady Boucher—"Who do *you* guess, miss Portman?"

"An amiable woman, I should guess, from Mr. Hervey's general character," cried lady Delacour.

"O an amiable woman, I take for granted; every woman is amiable of course as the newspapers tell us, when she is going to be married," said the dowager:—"an amiable woman, to be sure; but that means nothing. I have not had a guess from miss Portman."

"From general character"—Belinda began in a constrained voice.

"Do not guess from general character, my dear Belinda," interrupted lady Delacour; "for there is no judging, in these cases, from general character, of what people will like or dislike."

"Then I will leave it to your ladyship to guess this time, if you please," said Belinda.

"You will neither of you guess, till doomsday!" cried the dowager; "I must tell you Mr. Hervey's going to marry—"

in the strangest sort of way!—a girl that nobody knows—a daughter of a Mr. Hartley.—The father can give her a good fortune, it is true; but one should not have supposed, that fortune was an object with Mr. Hervey, who has such a noble one of his own. It's really difficult to believe it."

"So difficult, that I find it quite impossible," said lady Delacour, with an incredulous smile.

"Depend upon it, my dear lady Delacour," said the dowager, laying the convincing weight of her arm upon her ladyship's—"depend upon it, my dear lady Delacour, that my information is correct. Guess whom I had it from."

"Willingly. But first let me tell you, that I have seen Mr. Hervey within this half hour, and I never saw a man look less like a bridegroom."

"Indeed! well, I've heard too, that he didn't like the match: but what a pity when you saw him yourself this morning, that you didn't get all the particulars out of him. But let him look like what he

will, you'll find, that my information is perfectly correct.—Guess whom I had it from. From Mrs. Margaret Delacour: it was at her house, that Clarence Hervey first met Mr. Hartley, who, as I mentioned, is the father of the young lady. There was a charming scene, and some romantic story, about his finding the girl in a cottage, and calling her Virginia something or other, but I didn't clearly understand about that. However, this much is certain, that the girl, as her father told Mrs. Delacour, is desperately in love with Mr. Hervey, and they are to be married immediately. Depend upon it, you'll find my information correct. Good morning to you.—Lord bless me! now I recollect, I once heard, that Mr. Hervey was a great admirer of miss Portman," said the dowager.

"Your ladyship's information upon that point, I can assure you, from the best authority, was *not* correct;" said Belinda.

"You have not the presumption, to call

your own the *best* authority, I hope," said lady Delacour.

The inquisitive dowager, whose curiosity was put upon a new scent, immediately fastened her eyes upon Belinda's face; but from that she could make out nothing.—Was it because she had not the best eyes, or because there was nothing to be seen? To determine this question, she looked through her glass, to take a clearer view; but lady Delacour drew off her attention, by suddenly exclaiming—"My dear lady Boucher, when you go back to town, do send me a bottle of concentrated anima of quassia."

"Ah! ah! have I made a convert of you at last?" said the dowager, and, satisfied with the glory of this conversion she departed.

"Admire my knowledge of human nature, my dear Belinda," said lady Delacour. "Now she will talk, at the next place she goes to, of nothing, but of my faith in anima of quassia; and she will forget to make a gossiping story out of that

most imprudent hint, I foolishly gave her about Clarence Hervey's having been an admirer of yours.

"Do not leave the room, Belinda, I have a thousand things to say to you, my dear."

"Excuse me, at present, my dear lady Delacour, I am impatient to write a few lines to Mr. Vincent. He went away—"

"In a fit of jealousy, and I am glad of it."

"And I am sorry for it," said Belinda—"sorry that he should have so little confidence in me, as to feel jealousy without cause—without sufficient cause, I should say; for certainly your ladyship gave pain, by the manner in which you received Mr. Hervey."

"Lord, my dear, you would spoil any man upon Earth. You could not act more foolishly, if the man were your husband.—Are you privately married to him?—If you be not—for my sake—for your own—for Mr. Vincent's—do not write till we see the contents of Clarence Hervey's packet."

"It *can* make no alteration in what I write," said Belinda.

"Well, my dear, write what you please, but I only hope, you will not send your letter, till the packet arrives."

"Pardon me; I shall send it as soon as I possibly can:—the 'dear delight of giving pain' does not suit my taste."

Lady Delacour, as soon as she was left alone, began to reconsider the dowager's story; notwithstanding her unbelieving smile, it alarmed her, for she could not refuse to give it some degree of credit, when she learnt that Mrs. Margaret Delacour was the authority from whom it came. Mrs. Delacour was a woman of scrupulous veracity, and rigid in her dislike to gossiping; so that it was scarcely probable a report originating with her, however it might be altered by the way, should prove to be totally void of foundation. The name of Virginia coincided with sir Philip Baddely's hints, and with Marriott's discoveries: these circumstances considered, lady Delacour knew not what

opinion to form; and her eagerness to receive Mr. Hervey's packet every moment increased. She walked up and down the room—looked at her watch—fancied that it had stopped—held it to her ear—rang the bell every quarter of an hour, to inquire whether the messenger was not *yet* come back. At last, the long expected packet arrived.—She seized it, and hurried with it immediately to Belinda's room.

"Clarence Hervey's packet, my love! —Now, wo be to the person who interrupts us!" she bolted the door as she spoke—rolled an arm chair to the fire— "Now for it!" said she, seating herself. —"The devil upon two sticks, if he were looking down upon me from the house-top, or Champfort, who is the worse devil of the two, would, if he were peeping through the keyhole, swear I was going to open a love letter—and so I hope I am. Now for it!" cried she, breaking the seal.

"My dear friend," said Belinda, laying

her hand upon lady Delacour's, "before we open this packet, let me speak to you, whilst our minds are calm."

"Calm! It is the strangest time for your mind to be calm.—But I must not affront you by my incredulity. Speak, then, but be quick, for I do not pretend to be calm; it not being, thank my stars—'*mon métier d'être philosophe.*'—Crack goes the last seal—Speak now, or for ever after hold your tongue, my *calm philosopher* of Oakly-park; but do you wish me to attend to what you are going to say?"

"Yes," replied Belinda, smiling, "that is the usual wish of those who speak."

"Very true; and I can listen tolerably well, when I don't know what people are going to say; but when I know it all beforehand, I have an unfortunate habit of not being able to attend to one word. Now, my dear, let me anticipate your speech, and if my anticipation be wrong, then you shall rise to explain; and I will," said she, (putting her finger on her lips) "listen to you, like Harpocrates, without moving an eye-lash."

Belinda, as the most certain way of being heard, consented to hear, before she spoke.

"I will tell you," pursued lady Delacour, "if not what you are going to say to me, at least what you say to yourself, which is fully as much to the purpose. You say to yourself, 'Let this packet of Clarence Hervey contain what it may, it comes too late. Let him say, or let him do, 'tis all the same to me—because --(now for the reasoning)—because things have gone so far with Mr. Vincent, that lady Anne Percival, and all the world, (at Oakly-park) will blame me, if I retract. Then I have actually written to my aunt Stanhope; and preparations are absolutely making for my wedding. In short, *things have gone so far*, that I cannot recede; because—*things have gone so far.*'—This is the rondeau of your argument. Nay, hear me out, then you shall have your turn, my dear, for an hour, if you please. Let things have gone

ever so far, they can stop, and turn about again, cannot they? Lady Anne Percival is your friend, of course can wish only for your happiness. You think she is 'the thing that's most uncommon, a reasonable woman:' then she cannot be angry with you for being happy your own way. So I need not, as the orators say, *labour this point any more.* Now, as to your aunt, your writing to her so precipitately was certainly wrong; that is, contrary to my advice. But the fear of displeasing Mrs. Stanhope a little more or less is not to be put in competition with the hope of your happiness for life, especially as you have contrived to exist some months in a state of utter excommunication from her favour. After all, you know Mrs. Stanhope will not grieve for any thing but the loss of Mr. Vincent's fortune; and Mr. Hervey's fortune might do as well, or almost as well: at least, she may compound with her pride for the difference, by considering that an English member of par-

liament is, in the eyes of the world (the only eyes with which she sees) a better connexion, than the son of a West India planter, even though he may be a protegé of lady Anne Percival.

"Spare me your indignation, my dear! —What a look was there!—Reasoning for Mrs. Stanhope, must not I reason as Mrs. Stanhope does?—Now I will put this stronger still. Suppose that you had actually acknowledged, that Mr. Vincent had got beyond esteem with you; suppose that you had in due form consented to marry him; suppose that preparations were at this moment making for the wedding; even in that desperate case I should say to you, you are not a girl, to marry because your wedding gown is made up. Some few guineas are thrown away, perhaps; do not throw away your whole happiness after them; that would be sorry economy. Trust to me, my dear, I should say, as I have to you, in time of need. Or, if you fear to

be obliged to one who never was afraid of being obliged to you, ten to one the preparations for *a* wedding, though not *the* wedding, may be necessary immediately.—No matter to Mrs. Franks who the bridegroom may be; so that her bill be paid, she will not care the turning of a feather, whether it be paid by Mrs. Vincent or Mrs. Hervey. I hope I have convinced, I am sure I have made you blush, my dear, and that is some satisfaction. A blush at this moment is an earnest of victory. Io, triumphe! Now I will open my packet; my hand shall not be held an instant longer."

"I absolve you from the penance of hearing me for an hour, but I claim your promise to attend to me for a few minutes, my dear friend," said Belinda: "I thank you most sincerely for your kindness; and let me assure you that I should not hesitate to accept from you any species of obligation."

"Thanks! thanks!—there's a dear good girl!—my own Belinda!"

"But indeed you totally misunderstand me; your reasoning——"

"Show me the fault of it; I challenge all the logic of all the Percivals."

"Your reasoning is excellent, if your facts were not taken for granted.—You have taken it for granted, that Mr. Hervey is in love with me."

"No," said lady Delacour; "I take nothing for granted, as you will find, when I open this packet."

"You have taken it for granted," continued Belinda, "that I am still secretly attached to him—And you take it for granted, that I am restrained only by fear of lady Anne Percival, my aunt, and the world, from breaking off with Mr. Vincent? If you will read this letter, which I was writing to him when you came into the room, perhaps you will be convinced of your mistake."

"A letter to Mr. Vincent at such a time as this! then I will go and read my packet in my own room," cried lady Dela-

cour, rising hastily, with evident displeasure.

"Not even your displeasure, my dear friend," said Belinda, "can alter my determination, to behave with consistency and openness toward Mr. Vincent; and I can bear your anger, for I know it arises from your regard for me."

"I never loved you so little as at this instant, Belinda."

"You will do me justice when you are cool!"

"Cool!" repeated lady Delacour, as she left the room, "I never wish to be as cool as you are, Belinda! So, after all, you love Mr. Vincent, you'll marry Mr. Vincent!"

"I never said so:" replied Belinda: "you have not read my letter.—Oh, lady Delacour, at this instant—you should not reproach me."

"I did you injustice:" cried lady Delacour, as she now looked at Belinda's letter. "Send it—send it—you have said

the very thing you ought; and now sit down with me to this packet of Clarence Hervey's—Be just to him, as you are to Mr. Vincent, that's all I ask—Give him a fair hearing—now for it."—

CHAPTER XXVI.

VIRGINIA.

CLARENCE HERVEY'S packet contained a history of his connexion with Virginia St Pierre.

To save our hero from the charge of egotism; we shall relate the principal circumstances in the third person.

It was about a year before he had seen Belinda, that Clarence Hervey returned from his travels; he had been in France just before the revolution, when luxury and dissipation were at their height in Paris, and when a universal spirit of licentious gallantry prevailed. Some circumstances, in which he was personally interested, disgusted him strongly with the Parisian belles; he felt, that women, who were full of vanity, affectation, and arti-

fice, whose tastes were perverted, and whose feelings were depraved, were equally incapable of conferring, or enjoying real happiness. Whilst this conviction was full in his mind, he read the works of Rousseau: this eloquent writer's sense made it's full impression upon Clarence's understanding, and his declamations produced more than their just effect upon an imagination naturally ardent. He was charmed with the picture of Sophia, when contrasted with the characters of the women of the world with whom he had been disgusted; and he formed the romantic project of educating a wife for himself. Full of this idea, he returned to England, determined to carry his scheme immediately into execution; but he was some time delayed, by the difficulty of finding a proper object for his purpose: it was easy to meet with beauty in distress, and ignorance in poverty; but it was difficult to find simplicity without vulgarity, ingenuity without cunning, or even ignorance without prejudice; it was difficult to meet with an un-

derstanding totally uncultivated, yet likely to reward the labour of late instruction; a heart wholly unpractised, yet full of sensibility, capable of all the enthusiasm of passion, the delicacy of sentiment, and the firmness of rational constancy. It is not wonderful, that Mr. Hervey, with such high expectations, should not immediately find them gratified. Disappointed in his first search, he did not, however, relinquish his design, and at length, by accident, he discovered, or thought that he discovered, an object formed expressly for his purpose.

One fine evening in autumn, as he was riding through the New Forest, charmed with the picturesque beauties of the place, he turned out of the beaten road, and struck into a fresh track, which he pursued with increasing delight, till the setting sun reminded him, that it was necessary to postpone his farther reflections on forest scenery, and that it was time to think of finding his way out of the wood. He was now in the most retired part of the

forest, and he saw no path to direct him; but, as he stopped, to consider which way he should turn, a dog sprang from a thicket, barking furiously at his horse: his horse was high spirited, but he was master of him, and he obliged the animal to stand quietly till the dog, having barked himself hoarse, retreated of his own accord. Clarence watched, to see which way he would go, and followed him, in hopes of meeting with the person, to whom he belonged: he kept his guide in sight, till he came into a beautiful glade, in the midst of which was a neat, but very small cottage, with numerous bee-hives in the garden, surrounded by a profusion of rose trees, which were in full blow. This cultivated spot was strikingly contrasted with the wildness of the surrounding scenery. As he came nearer, Mr. Hervey saw a young girl watering the rose trees, which grew round the cottage, and an old woman beside her, filling a basket with the flowers. The old woman was like most other old women, except, that she had a

remarkably benevolent countenance, and an air, that had been acquired in better days; but the young girl did not appear to Clarence like any other young girl, that he had ever seen. The setting sun shone upon her countenance, the wind blew aside the ringlets of her light hair, and the blush of modesty overspread her cheeks, when she looked up at the stranger. In her large blue eyes, there was an expression of artless sensibility, with which Mr. Hervey was so powerfully struck, that he remained for some moments silent, totally forgetting, that he came to ask his way out of the forest. His horse had made so little noise upon the soft grass, that he was within a few yards of them before he was perceived by the old woman. As soon as she saw him, she turned abruptly to the young girl, put the basket of roses into her hand, and bid her carry them into the house. As she passed him, the girl, with a sweet innocent smile, held up the basket to Clarence, and offered him one of the roses.

"Go in, Rachel!—go in, child," said the old woman, in so loud and severe a tone, that both Rachel and Mr. Hervey started; the basket was overturned, and the roses all scattered upon the grass. Clarence, though he attempted some apology, was by no means concerned for the accident, as it detained Rachel some instants longer to collect her flowers, and gave him an opportunity of admiring her finely shaped hands and arms, and the ease and natural grace of her motions.

"Go in, Rachel," repeated the old woman, in a still more severe tone: "leave the roses there—I can pick them up, as well as you, child—go in."

The girl looked at the old woman with astonishment, her eyes filled with tears, and throwing down the roses, that she held in her hand, she said, "I *am* going, grandmother." The door closed after her, before Clarence recollected himself sufficiently, to tell the old lady how he had lost his way, &c. Her severity vanished, as soon as her granddaughter was safe in

the house, and with much readiness she showed him the road for which he inquired.

As soon, however, as it was in his power, he returned thither, for he had taken such good note of the place, that he easily found his way to the spot, which appeared to him a terrestrial Paradise. As he descended into the valley, he heard the humming of bees, but he saw no smoke rising from the cottage chimney—no dog barked—no living creature was to be seen—the house-door was shut—the window shutters closed—all was still. The place looked as if it had been deserted by it's inhabitants—the roses had not been watered, many of them had shed their leaves; and a basket half full of dead flowers, was left in the middle of the garden. Clarence alighted, and tried the latch of the door, but it was fastened; he listened, but heard no sound; he walked round to the back of the house: a small lattice window was half open, and, as he went toward it, he thought he heard a

low moaning voice; he gently pulled aside the curtain, and peeped in at the window. The room was darkened, his eyes had been dazzled by the sun, so that he could not, at first, see any object distinctly; but he heard the moaning repeated, at intervals, and a soft voice at last said—

"O, speak to me!—speak to me, once again—only once—only once again, speak to me!"

The voice came from a corner of the room, to which he had not yet turned his eyes; and as he drew aside more of the curtain, to let in more light, a figure started up from the side of a bed, at which she had been kneeling, and he saw the beautiful young girl, with her hair all dishevelled, and the strongest expression of grief in her countenance. He asked, if he could do her any service. She beckoned to him to come in, and then, pointing to the bed, on which the old woman was stretched, said—

"She cannot speak to me—she cannot move one side—she has been so these

three days—but she is not dead—she is not dead!"

The poor creature had been struck with the palsy. As Clarence went close to the bed, she opened her eyes, and fixing them upon him, she stretched out her withered hand, caught fast hold of her grand-daughter, and then raising herself, with a violent effort, she pronounced the word, "Begone!" Her face grew black, her features convulsed, and she sunk down again in her bed, without power of utterance. Clarence left the house instantly, mounted his horse, and galloped to the next town for medical assistance. The poor woman was so far recovered by a skilful apothecary, that she could, in a few, days, articulate so as to be understood. She knew that her end was approaching fast, and seemed piously resigned to her fate. Mr. Hervey went constantly to see her; but, though grateful to him for his humanity, and for the assistance he had procured for her, yet she appeared agitated when he was in the room, and frequently

looked at him, and at her granddaughter, with uncommon anxiety. At last, she whispered something to the girl, who immediately left the room; and she then beckoned to him, to come closer to the arm chair, in which she was seated.

"May be, sir," said she, "you thought me out of my right mind, the day when I was lying on that bed, and said to you, in such a peremptory tone—Begone!--It was all I could say then—and, in truth, I cannot speak quite plain yet; nor ever shall again. But God's will be done. I had only one thing to say to you, sir, about that poor girl of mine——"

Clarence listened to her with eagerness. She paused, and then laying her cold hand upon his, she looked up earnestly in his face, and continued—

"You are a fine young gentleman, and you look like a good gentleman, but so did the man who broke the heart of her poor mother. Her mother was carried off from a boarding-school, when she was scarcely sixteen, by a wretch, who, after

privately marrying her, would not own his marriage, staid with her but two years, then went abroad, left his wife and his infant, and has never been heard of since. My daughter died of a broken heart.—Rachel was then between three and four years old, a beautiful child.—God forgive her father!—God's will be done!"—She paused to subdue her emotion, and then, with some difficulty, proceeded.—

"My only comfort is, I have bred Rachel up in innocence; I never sent her to a boarding-school.—No, no: from the moment of her birth, till now, I have kept her under my own eye. In this cottage she has lived with me, away from all the world. You are the first man she ever spoke to; the first man who ever was within these doors. She is innocence itself!—O, sir! as you hope for mercy, when you are as I am now, spare the innocence of that poor child!—Never, never come here after her, when I am dead and gone! Consider, she is but a child, sir.—God never made a better crea-

ture.—O, promise me you will not be the ruin of my sweet innocent girl, and I shall die in peace!"

Clarence Hervey was touched. He instantly made the promise required of him; and, as nothing less would satisfy the poor dying woman, confirmed it by a solemn oath.

"Now I am easy," said she—"quite easy—and may God bless you for it. In the village here, there is a Mrs. Smith, a good farmer's wife, who knows us well; she will see to have me decently buried, and then has promised to sell all the little I have for my girl, and to take care of her. —And you'll never come near her more?"

"I did not promise that," said Hervey.

The old woman again looked much disturbed.—

"Ah, good young gentleman!" said she "take my advice, it will be best for you both. If you see her again, you will love her, sir—you can't help it:—and, if she sees you—poor thing, how innocently she

smiled when she gave you the rose!—O, sir, never come near her when I am gone! It is too late for me now to get her out of your way.—This night, I'm sure, will be my last in this world—O, promise me you will never come here again!"

"After the oath I have taken," replied Clarence, "that promise would be unnecessary. Trust to my honour."—

"Honour! O, that was the word the gentleman said, that betrayed her poor mother, and left her afterward to die!—O, sir! sir——"

The violent emotion that she felt was too much for her—she fell back exhausted—never spoke more—and an hour afterwards he expired in the arms of her granddaughter. The poor girl could not believe, that she had breathed her last. She made a sign to the surgeon, and to Clarence Hervey, who stood beside her, to be silent; and listened, fancying that the corpse would breathe again. Then she kissed the cold lips, and the shrivelled cheeks, and the eyelids that were closed

for ever. She warmed the dead fingers with her breath—she raised the heavy arm, and when it fell, she perceived there was no hope : she threw herself upon her knees: —“ She is dead ?” she exclaimed ; “ and she has died without giving me her blessing. She can never bless me again.”

They took her into the air, and Clarence Hervey sprinkled water upon her face. It was a fine night, and the fresh air soon brought her to her senses. He then said, that he would leave her to the care of the surgeon, and ride to the village, in search of that Mrs. Smith, who had promised to be her friend.

“ And so *you* are going away from me too ?” said she ; and she burst into tears. At the sight of these tears Clarence turned away, and hurried from her. He sent the woman from the village, but returned no more that night.

Her simplicity, sensibility, and, perhaps more than he was aware, her beauty, had pleased and touched him extremely. The idea of attaching a perfectly pure, disin-

terested, unpractised heart, was delightful to his imagination: the cultivation of her understanding, he thought, would be an easy and a pleasing task: all difficulties vanished before his sanguine hopes.

"Sensibility," said he to himself, "is the parent of great talents, and great virtues; and evidently she possesses natural feeling in an uncommon degree; it shall be developed with skill, patience, and delicacy; and I will deserve before I claim my reward."

The next day he returned to the cottage, accompanied by an elderly lady, a Mrs. Ormond; the same lady, who afterward to Marriott's prejudiced eyes had appeared *more like a duenna than any thing else*, but who, to this simple, unsuspicious girl, seemed like what she really was, a truly good natured benevolent woman. She consented, most readily, to put herself under the protection of Mrs. Ormond, "provided Mrs. Smith would give her leave." There was no difficulty in persuading Mrs. Smith, that it was for her

advantage. Mrs. Smith, who was a plain farmer's wife, told all that she knew of Rachel's history, but all that she knew was little. She had heard only hints at odd times from the old woman: these agreed perfectly with what Mr. Hervey had already heard.

"The *old gentlewoman*," said Mrs. Smith, "as I believe I should call her by rights, has lived in the forest there, where you found her, these many a year—she earned her subsistence by tending bees and making rose-water—she was a good soul, but very particular, especially about her granddaughter, which, considering all things, one cannot blame her for. She often told me, she would never put Rachel to no boarding school, which I approved, seeing she had no fortune; and it is the ruin of girls, to my mind, to be bred above their means; as it was of her mother, sir. Then she would not never teach Rachel to write, for fear she should take to scrawling nonsense of love-letters, as her mother did before her. Now, sir,

this I approved too, for I don't much mind about book-learning myself; and I even thought it would have been as well if the girl had not learnt to read; but that she did learn, and was always fond of, and I'm sure it was more plague than use too to her grandmother, for she was as particular about the books that the girl was to read, as about all the rest. She went farther than all that, sir, for she never would let the girl speak to a man—not a man ever entered the doors of the house."

"So she told me."

"And she told you true enough—But there, I thought, she was quite wrong; for seeing the girl must, sometime or other, speak to men, where was the use of her not learning to do it properly?—Lord, ma'am," continued Mrs. Smith, addressing herself to Mrs. Ormond, "lord, ma'am, though it is a sin to be remembering so much of the particularities of the dead, I must say there never was an old lady who had more scrupulosities than the deceased. I verily thought, one day, she would have

gone into fits about a picture of a man, that Rachel lit upon by accident; as if a picture had any sense to hurt a body—Now if it had been one of your naked pictures, there might have been some delicacy in her dislike to it; but it was no such thing, but a very proper picture.

"A picture, ma'am, of a young sea officer, in his full uniform, quite proper, ma'am. It was his mother, that left it with me, and I had it always in my own room, and the girl saw it, and was mightily taken with it, being the first thing of the kind she had ever lit upon, and the old lady comes in, *a d took on*, till I verily thought she was crazed. Lord! I really could not but laugh; but I checked myself, when the poor old soul's eyes filled with tears, which made me know, she was thinking of her daughter that was dead. When I thought on the cause of her particularity about Rachel, I could not laugh any more at her strangeness.

"I promised the good lady that day,

in case of her death, to take care of her granddaughter; and I thought in my own mind, that, in time to come, if one of my boys should take a fancy to her, I should make no objections, because she was always a good, modest behaved girl; and, I'm sure, would make a good wife, though too delicate for hard country work: but, as it pleases God to send you madam, and the good gentleman, to take the charge of her off my hands, I am content it should be so, and I will sell every thing here for her honestly, and bring it to you madam, for poor Rachel."

There was nothing that Rachel was anxious to carry away with her but a little bullfinch, of which she was very fond. One, and but one, circumstance about Rachel stopped the current of Clarence Hervey's imagination, and this, consequently, was excessively disagreeable to him—her name—the name of Rachel he could not endure, and he thought it so unsuited to her, that he could scarcely believe it belonged to her. He con-

sequently resolved to change it as soon as possible. The first time that he beheld her, he was struck with the idea that she resembled the description of Virginia in M. de St. Pierre's celebrated Romance; and by this name he always called her, from the hour that she quitted her cottage.

Mrs. Ormond, the lady whom he had engaged to take care of his Virginia, was a widow, the mother of a gentleman, who had been his tutor at college. Her son died, and left her in such narrow circumstances, that she was obliged to apply to her friends for pecuniary assistance.

Mr. Hervey had been liberal in his contributions; from his childhood he had known her worth, and her attachment to him was blended with the most profound respect; she was not a woman of superiour abilities, or of much information; but her excellent temper and gentle disposition won affection, though she

had not any talents to excite admiration. Mr. Hervey had perfect confidence in her integrity, he believed that she would exactly comply with his directions, and he thought that her want of literature and ingenuity could easily be supplied by his own care and instructions. He took a house for her and his fair pupil at Windsor, and he exacted a solemn promise, that she would neither receive nor pay any visits. Virginia was thus secluded from all intercourse with the world: she saw no one but Mrs. Ormond, Clarence Hervey, and Mr. Moreton, an elderly clergyman, whom Mr. Hervey engaged to attend every sunday to read prayers for them at home. Virginia never expressed the slightest curiosity to see any other persons, or any thing beyond the walls of the garden that belonged to the house in which she lived; her present retirement was not greater than that to which she had long been accustomed, and consequently she

did not feel her seclusion from the world as any restraint: with the circumstances that were altered in her situation, she seemed neither to be dazzled nor charmed; the objects of convenience or luxury, that were new to her, she looked upon with indifference, but with any thing that reminded her of her former way of life, and of her grandmother's cottage, she was delighted.

One day Mr. Hervey asked her, whether she should like better to return to that cottage, or to remain where she was? He trembled for her answer—She innocently replied—"I should like best to go back to the cottage, if you would go with me—but I would rather stay here with you, than live there without you."

Clarence was touched and flattered by this artless answer, and for some time he discovered every day fresh indications, as he thought, of virtue and abilities in his charming pupil. Her indifference to objects of show and ornament appeared to him an indisputable proof of her magna-

nimity, and of the superiority of her unprejudiced mind.—What a difference, thought he, between this child of nature and the frivolous sophisticated slaves of art!

To try and prove the simplicity of her taste, and the purity of her mind, he once presented to her a pair of diamond earrings, and a moss rosebud, and asked her to take whichever she liked best.—She eagerly snatched the rose, crying—"O! it puts me in mind of the cottage:—how sweet it smells?"

She placed it in her bosom, and then looking at the diamonds, said—"They are pretty sparkling things—What are they?—Of what use are they?"—And she looked with more curiosity and admiration at the manner in which the earring shut and opened, than at the diamonds. Clarence was charmed with her. When Mrs. Ormond told her, that these things were to hang in her ears, she laughed, and said—"How! how can I make them hang?"

"Have you never observed, that I wear earrings?" said Mrs. Ormond.

"Ay! but yours are not like these—And, let me look, I never saw how you fastened them—Let me look—O! you have holes in your ears, but I have none in mine."

Mrs. Ormond told her, that holes could easily be made in her ears, by running a steel pin through them. She shrunk back, defending her ear with one hand, and pushing the diamonds from her with the other, exclaiming—"O, no, no!—unless," added she, changing her tone, and turning to Clarence, "unless you wish it:—if you bid me, I will."

Clarence was scarcely master of himself at this instant; and it was with the utmost difficulty that he could reply to her with that dispassionate calmness, which became his situation and hers.—And yet there was more of ignorance and timidity, perhaps, than of sound sense or philosophy in Virginia's indifference to diamonds;

she did not consider them as ornaments that would confer distinction upon their possessor, because she was ignorant of the value affixed to them by society. Isolated in the world she had no excitements to the love of finery, no competition, no means of comparison, or opportunities of display; diamonds were consequently as useless to her, as guineas were to Robinson Crusoe on his desert island. It could not justly be said, that he was free from avarice, because he set no value on the gold; or that she was free from vanity, because she rejected the diamonds. These reflections could not possibly have escaped a man of Clarence Hervey's abilities, had he not been engaged in defence of a favourite system of education, or if his pupil had not been quite so handsome. Virginia's absolute ignorance of the world frequently gave an air of originality to her most trivial observations, which made her appear at once interesting and entertaining. All her ideas of happiness were

confined to the life she had led during her childhood; and as she had accidentally lived in a beautiful situation in the New Forest, she appeared to have an instinctive taste for the beauties of nature, and for what we call the picturesque. This taste Mr. Hervey perceived, whenever he showed her prints and drawings, and it was a fresh source of delight and self-complacency to him. All that was amiable or estimable in Virginia had a double charm, from the secret sense of his penetration, in having discovered and appreciated the treasure. The affections of this innocent girl had no object but himself and Mrs. Ormond, and they were strong, perhaps, in proportion as they were concentrated. The artless familiarity of her manner, and her unsuspicious confidence, amounting almost to credulity, had irresistible power over Mr. Hervey's mind; he felt them as appeals at once to his tenderness and his generosity. He treated her with the utmost delicacy, and his oath was never

absent from his mind: but he felt proudly convinced, that if he had not been bound by any such solemn engagement, no temptation could have made him deceive and betray confiding innocence.

Conscious that his views were honourable, anticipating the generous pleasure he should have in showing his superiority to all mercenary considerations, and worldly prejudices, in the choice of a wife, he indulged, with a species of pride, his increasing attachment to Virginia; but he was not sensible of the rapid progress of the passion, till he was suddenly awakened by a few simple observations of Mrs. Ormond.

"This is Virginia's birth-day—she tells me she is seventeen to day."

"Seventeen!—is she only seventeen?" cried Clarence, with a mixture of surprise and disappointment in his countenance—"Only seventeen!—Why she is but a child still."

"Quite a child," said Mrs. Ormond, "and so much the better."

"So much the worse, I think," said Clarence. "But are you sure she's only seventeen—she must be mistaken—she must be eighteen at least."

"God forbid!"

"God forbid!—Why Mrs. Ormond?"

"Because, you know, we have a year more before us."

"That may be a very satisfactory prospect to you," said Mr. Hervey, smiling.

"And to you, surely," said Mrs. Ormond; "for, I suppose, you would be glad that your wife should, at least, know the common things that every body knows."

"As to that," said Clarence, "I should be glad that my wife were ignorant of what *every body knows.* Nothing is so tiresome to a man of any taste or abilities, as *what every body knows.* I am rather desirous to have a wife who has an uncommon, than a common understanding."

"But you would choose, would not

you?"—said Mrs. Ormond, hesitating, with an air of great deference—"that your wife should know how to write?"

"To be sure," replied Clarence, colouring—"Does not Virginia know how to write?"

"How should she?" said Mrs. Ormond—"it is no fault of hers, poor girl—She was never taught, you know it was her grandmother's notion, that she should not learn to write, lest she should write love letters."

"But *you* promised that she should be taught to write, and I trusted to you, Mrs. Ormond."

"She has been here only two months, and all that time, I am sure, I have done every thing in my power; but when a person comes to be sixteen or seventeen, it is up hill work."

"I will teach her myself," cried Clarence—"I am sure she may be taught any thing."

"By you," said Mrs. Ormond, smiling; "but not by me."

"You have no doubts of her capacity, surely?"

"I am no judge of capacity, especially of the capacity of those I love; and I am grown very fond of Virginia; she is a charming, open hearted, simple, affectionate creature. I rather think it is from indolence, that she does not learn, and not from want of abilities."

"All indolence arises from want of excitement," said Clarence—"If she had proper motives, she would conquer her indolence."

"Why, I dare say, if I were to tell her, that she would never have a letter from Mr. Hervey, till she is able to write an answer, she would learn to write very expeditiously; but I thought that would not be a proper motive; because you forbid me to tell her your future views. And indeed it would be highly imprudent, on your account, as well as hers, to give her any hint of that kind: because you might change your mind, before she's old enough for you to think of her seriously, and then you would not know what to do with her;

and after entertaining hopes of becoming your wife, she would be miserable, I am sure, with that affectionate tender heart of hers, if you were to leave her. Now that she knows nothing of the matter, we are all safe, and as we should be."

Though Clarence Hervey did not at this time foresee any great probability of his changing his mind, yet he felt the good sense and justice of Mrs. Ormond's suggestions: and he was alarmed to perceive that his mind had been so intoxicated, as to suffer such obvious reflections to escape his attention. Mrs. Ormond, a woman whom he had been accustomed to consider as far his inferiour in capacity, he now felt was superiour to him in prudence, merely because she was undisturbed by passion. He resolved to master his own mind: to consider that it was not a mistress, but a wife, he wanted in Virginia:—that a wife without capacity, or without literature, could never be a companion suited to him; let her beauty or sensibility be ever so exquisite and captivating. The happiness of his life and of hers were at

stake, and every motive of prudence and delicacy called upon him to command his affections. He was, however, still sanguine in his expectations from Virginia's understanding, and from his own power of developing her capacity. He made several attempts, with the greatest skill and patience; and his fair pupil, though she did not by any means equal his hopes, astonished Mrs. Ormond, by her comparatively rapid progress.

"I always believed, that *you* could make her any thing you pleased," said she. "You are a tutor who can work miracles with Virginia."

"I see no miracles," replied Clarence; "I am conscious of no such power—I should be sorry to possess any such influence, until I am sure that it would be for our mutual happiness."

Mr. Hervey then conjured Mrs. Ormond, by all her attachment to him and to her pupil, never to give Virginia the most distant idea, that he had any intentions of making her his wife. She promised to do all that was in her power, to keep

this secret, but she could not help observing, that it had already been betrayed, as plainly as looks could speak, by Mr. Hervey himself. Clarence in vain endeavoured to exculpate himself from this charge: Mrs. Ormond brought to his recollection so many instances of his indiscretion, that it was substantiated even in his own judgment, and he was amazed to find, that all the time he had put so much constraint upon his inclinations, he had, nevertheless, so obviously betrayed them. His surprise, however, was at this time unmixed with any painful regret; he did not foresee the probability that he should change his mind; and notwithstanding Mrs. Ormond assured him, that Virginia's sensibility had increased, he was persuaded that she was mistaken, and that his pupil's heart and imagination were yet untouched. The innocent openness, with which she expressed her affection for him, confirmed him, he said, in his opinion. To do him justice, Clarence had none of the presumption, which too often characterizes

men, who have been successful, as it is called, with the fair sex. His acquaintance with women had increased his persuasion, that it is difficult to excite genuine love in the heart; and with respect to himself, he was upon this subject astonishingly incredulous. It was scarcely possible to convince him, that he was beloved.

Mrs. Ormond, piqued upon this subject, determined to ascertain more decisively her pupil's sentiments.

"My dear," said she, one day to Virginia, who was feeding her bullfinch, —"I do believe you are fonder of that bird, than of any thing in the world—fonder of it, I am sure, than of me?"

"O! you cannot think so," said Virginia, with an affectionate smile.

"Well! fonder than you are of Mr. Hervey, you will allow, at least?"

"No indeed!" cried she, eagerly: "how can you think me so foolish, so childish, so ungrateful, as to prefer a little worthless bird to him—" (the bullfinch be-

gan to sing so loud at this instant, that her enthusiastic speech was stopped.)—" My pretty bird," said she, as it perched upon her hand, " I love you very much, but if Mr. Hervey were to ask it, to wish it, I would open that window, and let you fly; yes, and bid you fly away far from me for ever. Perhaps he does wish it?—Does he?—Did he tell you so?" cried she, looking earnestly in Mrs. Ormond's face, as she moved towards the window.

Mrs. Ormond put her hand upon the sash, as Virginia was going to throw it up——

" Gently, gently, my love—Whither is your imagination carrying you?"

" I thought *something* by your look," said Virginia, blushing.

" And I thought *something*, my dear Virginia," said Mrs. Ormond, smiling.

" What did you think?—What *could* you think?"

" I cannot—I mean, I would rather not at present tell you. But do not look

so grave, I will tell you some time or other, if you cannot guess."

Virginia was silent, and stood abashed.

"I am sure, my sweet girl," said Mrs. Ormond. "I do not mean, by any thing I said, to confuse or blame you. It is very natural, that you should be grateful, to Mr. Hervey, and that you should admire, and, *to a certain degree, love* him."

Virginia looked up delighted, yet with some hesitation in her manner.

"He is indeed," said Mrs. Ormond, "one of the first of human beings: such even *I* have always thought him; and I am sure I like you the better, my dear, for your sensibility," said she, kissing Virginia as she spoke; "only we must take care of it, or this tenderness might go too far."

"How so," said Virginia, returning her caresses with fondness; "can I love you and Mr. Hervey too much?"

"Not me."

"Nor him, I'm sure—he is so good, so very good!—I am afraid that I do not love

him *enough*," said she, sighing. "I love him enough when he is absent, but not when he is present. When he is near me, I feel a sort of fear, mixed with my love. I wish to please him very much, but I should not quite like, that he should show his love for me as you do—as you did ust now."

"My dear, it would not be proper that he should; you are quite right not to wish it."

"Am I? I was afraid that it was a sign of my not liking him as much as I ought."

"Ah, my poor child!—you love him full as much as you ought."

"Do you think so? I am glad of it," said Virginia, with a look of such confiding simplicity, that her friend was touched to the heart.

"I do think so, my love," said Mrs. Ormond, "and I hope I shall never be sorry for it, nor you either. But it is not proper, that we should say any more upon this subject now. Where are your draw-

ings? Where is your writing? My dear, we must get forward with these things as fast as we can. That is the way to please Mr. Hervey, I can tell you."

Confirmed by this conversation in her own opinion, Mrs. Ormond was satisfied. From delicacy to her pupil, she did not repeat all that had passed to Mr. Hervey, resolving to wait till the *proper* moment. "She is too young and too childish, for him to think of marrying yet, for a year or two," thought she, "and it is better to repress her sensibility, till her education is more finished; by that time Mr. Hervey will find out his mistake."

In the mean time she could not help thinking that he was blind, for he continued steady in his belief of Virginia's indifference.

To dissipate his own mind, and to give time for the developement of hers, he now, according to his resolution, left his pupil to the care of Mrs. Ormond, and mixed as much as possible in gay and fashionable company. It was at this period, that he

renewed his acquaintance with lady Delacour, whom he had seen and admired before he went abroad. He found that his gallantry, on the famous day of the battle between the turkies and pigs, was still remembered with gratitude by her ladyship; she received him with marked courtesy, and he soon became a constant visitor at her house. Her wit entertained, her eloquence charmed him, and he followed, admired, and *gallanted* her, without scruple, for he considered her merely as *une franche coquette*, who preferred the glory of conquest to the security of reputation. With such a woman he thought he could amuse himself without danger, and he every where appeared the foremost in the public train of her ladyship's admirers. He soon discovered, however, that her talents were far superiour to what are necessary for playing the part of a fine lady; his visits became more and more agreeable to him, and he was glad to feel, that, by dividing his attention, his passion for Virginia insensibly diminished, or,

as he said to himself, became more reasonable. In conversing with lady Delacour, his faculties were always called into full play; in talking to Virginia, his undersanding was passive; he perceived that a large proportion of his intellectual powers and of his knowledge was absolutely useless to him in her company; and this did not raise her either in his love or esteem. Her simplicity and naïveté, however, sometimes relieved him, after he had been fatigued by the extravagant gayety and *glare* of her ladyship's manners; and he reflected, that the coquetry, which amused him in an acquaintance, would be odious in a wife: the perfect innocence of Virginia promised security to his domestic happiness, and he did not change his views, tho' he was less eager for the period of their accomplishment. "I cannot expect every thing that is desirable," said he, to himself: "a more brilliant character than Virginia's would excite my admiration, but could not command my confidence." It was whilst his mind was in this situation,

that he became acquainted with Belinda. At first, the idea of her having been educated by the matchmaking Mrs. Stanhope prejudiced him against her; but as he had opportunities of observing her conduct, this prepossession was conquered, and when she had secured his esteem he could no longer resist her power over his heart. In comparison with Belinda, Virginia appeared to him but an insipid, though innocent child; the one he found was his equal, the other his inferior; the one he saw could be a companion, a friend to him for life; the other would merely be his pupil, or his plaything. Belinda had cultivated tastes, an active understanding, a knowledge of literature, the power and the habit of conducting herself. Virginia was ignorant and indolent, she had few ideas, and no wish to extend her knowledge. She was so entirely unacquainted with the world, that it was absolutely impossible she could conduct herself with that discretion, which must be the combined result of reasoning and experience. Mr.

Hervey had felt gratuitous confidence in Virginia's innocence; but on Belinda's prudence, which he had opportunities of seeing tried, he gradually learned to feel a different, and a higher species of reliance, which it is neither in our power to bestow nor to refuse. The virtues of Virginia sprang from sentiment; those of Belinda, from reason.

Clarence, whilst he made all these comparisons, became every day more wisely and more fondly attached to Belinda; and, at length, he became desirous to change the nature of his connexion with Virginia, and to appear to her only in the light of a friend or a benefactor. He thought of giving her two thousand pounds, and of leaving her under the care of Mrs. Ormond, till some suitable method of establishing her in the world should occur. Unfortunately, just at the time when Mr. Hervey formed this plan, and before it was communicated to Mrs. Ormond, difficulties arose, which prevented him from putting it into execution.

Whilst he had been engaged in the gay world at lady Delacour's, his pupil had necessarily been left much to the management of Mrs. Ormond. This lady, with the best possible intentions, had not that reach of mind and variety of resource, necessary to direct the exquisite sensibility and ardent imagination of Virginia. The solitude, in which she lived, added to the difficulty of the task; without companions to interest her social affections, without real objects to occupy her senses and understanding, Virginia's mind was either perfectly indolent, or *exalted* by romantic views, and visionary ideas of happiness. As she had never seen any thing of society, all her notions were drawn from books; the severe restrictions, which her grandmother had early laid upon the choice of these, seemed to have awakened her curiosity, and to have increased her appetite for books—it was insatiable. Reading, indeed, was now almost her only pleasure; for Mrs. Ormond's conversation was seldom entertaining, and Virginia had no longer

those occupations, which filled a portion of her day at the cottage.

Mr. Hervey had cautioned Mrs. Ormond against putting *common* novels into her hands, but he made no objection to romances: these, he thought, breathed a spirit favourable to female virtue, exalted the respect for chastity, and inspired enthusiastic admiration of honour, generosity, truth, and all the noble qualities which dignify human nature. Virginia devoured these romances with the greatest eagerness; and Mrs. Ormond, who found her a prey to ennui, when her fancy was not amused, indulged her taste; yet she strongly suspected, that they contributed to increase her passion for the only man who could, in her imagination, represent a hero.

One night Virginia found, in Mrs. Ormond's room, a volume of St. Pierre's Paul and Virginia. She knew, that her own name had been taken from this romance; Mr. Hervey had her picture painted in this character; and these cir-

cumstances strongly excited her curiosity to read the book. Mrs. Ormond could not refuse to let her have it; for, though it was not an ancient romance, it did not exactly come under the description of a common novel, and Mr. Hervey was not at hand to give his advice. Virginia sat down instantly to her volume, and never stirred from the spot, till she had nearly finished it.

"What is it, that strikes your fancy so much? What are you considering so deeply, my love?" said Mrs. Ormond, observing, that she seemed lost in thought. "Let us see, my dear," continued Mrs. Ormond, offering to take the book, which hung from her hand.—Virginia started from her reverie, but held the volume fast. —"Will not you let me read over your shoulder, along with you?" said Mrs. Ormond. "Won't you let me share your pleasure?"

"It was not pleasure that I felt, I believe," said Virginia. "I would rather, you should not see just that particular

part that I was reading; and, yet, if you desire it," added she, resigning the book reluctantly——

"What can make you so much afraid of me, my sweet girl?"

"I am not afraid of you—but—of myself," said Virginia, sighing.

Mrs. Ormond read the following passage:

"She thought of Paul's friendship, more pure than the waters of the fountain, stronger than the united palms, and sweeter than the perfume of flowers; and these images, in night and in solitude, gave double force to the passion, which she nourished in her heart. She suddenly left the dangerous shades, and went to her mother, to seek protection against herself. She wished to reveal her distress to her; she pressed her hands, and the name of Paul was on her lips; but the oppression of her heart took away all utterance, and, laying her head upon her mother's bosom, she only wept."

"And am not *I* a mother to you, my beloved Virginia?" said Mrs. Ormond. "Though I cannot express my affection in such charming language as this, yet, believe me, no mother was ever fonder of a child."

Virginia threw her arms round Mrs. Ormond, and laid her head upon her friend's bosom, as if she wished to realize the illusion, and to be the Virginia of whom she had been reading.

"I know all you think, and all you feel: I know," whispered Mrs. Ormond, "the name that is on *your* lips."

"No, indeed, you do not: you cannot," cried Virginia, suddenly raising her head, and looking up in Mrs. Ormond's face, with surprise and timidity—"how could you possibly know *all* my thoughts and feelings? I never told them to you; for, indeed, I have only confused ideas, floating in my imagination, from the books I have been reading. I do not distinctly know my own feelings."

"This is all very natural, and a proof of your perfect innocence and simplicity, my child. But, why did the passage you were reading just now strike you so much?"

"I was only considering," said Virginia, "whether it was the description of—love."

"And your heart told you, that it was?"

"I don't know," said she, sighing. "But of this I am certain, that I had not the name, which you were thinking of, upon my lips."

"Ah!" thought Mrs. Ormond, "she has not forgotten how I checked her sensibility some time ago. Poor girl! she is become afraid of me, and I have taught her to dissemble; but she betrays herself every moment."

"My dear," said Mrs. Ormond, "you need not fear me—I cannot blame you—In your situation, it is impossible, that you could help loving Mr. Hervey."

"Is it?"

"Yes; quite impossible. So do not blame yourself for it."

"No, I do not blame myself for that. I only blame myself for not loving him *enough*, as I told you once before."

"Yes, my dear; and the oftener you tell me so, the more I am convinced of your affection. It is one of the strongest symptoms of love, that we are unconscious of it's extent. We fancy, that we can never do too much for the beloved object."

"That is exactly what I feel about Mr. Hervey."

"That we can never love him enough."

"Ah! that is precisely what I feel for Mr. Hervey."

"And what you ought—I mean, what it is natural you should feel; and what he will himself, I hope, indeed I dare say, some time or other wish, and be glad that you should feel."

"Some time or other! Does not he wish it now?"

"I—he—My dear, what a question is that? And how shall I answer it? We must judge of what he feels by what he expresses: when he expresses love for you,

it will then be the time to show yours for him."

"He has always expressed love for me, I think," said Virginia—"always, till lately," continued Virginia; "but lately he has been away so much, and when he comes home, he does not look so well pleased; so that I was afraid he was angry with me, and that he thought me ungrateful."

"O, my love, do not torment yourself with these vain fears! And yet I know that you cannot help it."

"Since you are so kind, so very kind to me," said Virginia, "I will tell you all my fears and doubts.—But it is late —There! the clock struck one.—I will not keep you up."

"I am not at all sleepy," said the indulgent Mrs. Ormond.

"Nor I," said Virginia.

"Now, then," said Mrs. Ormond, "for these doubts and fears."

"I was afraid that, perhaps, Mr. Hervey would be angry if he knew that I

thought of any thing in the world but him."

"Of what else do you think?—Of nothing else from morning till night, that I can see."

"Ah, then you do not see into my mind. In the daytime I often think of those heroes, those charming heroes, that I read of in the books you have given me."

"To be sure you do."

"And is not that wrong? Would not Mr. Hervey be displeased if he knew it?"

"Why should he?"

"Because they are not quite like him. I love some of them better than I do him, and he might think that *ungrateful.*"

How naturally love inspires the idea of jealousy, thought Mrs. Ormond. "My dear," said she, "you carry your ideas of delicacy and gratitude to an extreme; but it is very natural you should: however, you need not be afraid, Mr. Hervey cannot be jealous of those charming

heroes, that never existed, though they are not quite like him."

"I am very glad that he would not think me ungrateful—but if he knew that I dream of them sometimes?"

"He would think you dreamed, as all people do, of what they think of in the daytime."

"And he would not be angry? I am very glad of it.—But I once saw a picture——"

"I know you did—well," said Mrs. Ormond, "and your grandmother was frightened because it was the picture of a man—hey? If she was not your grandmother, I should say that she was a simpleton. I assure you, Mr. Hervey is not like her, if that is what you mean to ask. He would not be angry at your having seen fifty pictures."

"I am glad of it—But I see it very often in my dreams."

"Well, if you had seen more pictures, you would not see this so often. It was

the first you ever saw, and very naturally you remember it. Mr. Hervey would not be angry at that," said Mrs. Ormond, laughing.

"But sometimes, in my dreams, it speaks to me."

"And what does it say?"

"The same sort of things that those heroes I read of say to their mistresses."

"And do you never, in your dreams, hear Mr. Hervey say these sort of things."

"No."

"And do you never see Mr. Hervey in these dreams?"

"Sometimes; but he does not speak to me; he does not look at me with the same sort of tenderness, and he does not throw himself at my feet."

"No; because he has never done all this in reality."

"No; and I wonder how I come to dream of such things."

"So do I; but you have read and thought of them, it is plain. Now go to sleep, there's my good girl; that is the

best thing you can do at present—Go to sleep."

It was not long after this conversation, that sir Philip Baddely and Mr. Rochfort scaled the garden wall, to obtain a sight of Clarence Hervey's mistress. Virginia was astonished, terrified, and disgusted, by their appearance; they seemed to her a species of animals, for which she had no name, and of which she had no prototype in her imagination. That they were men she saw; but they were clearly not *Clarence Herveys*: they bore still less resemblance to the courteous knights of chivalry. Their language was so different from any of the books she had read, and any of the conversation she had heard, that they were scarcely intelligible. After they had forced themselves into her presence, they did not scruple to address her in the most unceremonious manner. Amongst other rude things, they said, "Damme, my pretty dear, you cannot love the man that keeps you prisoner in this manner, hey? Damme, you'd better come and live with

one of us. You can't love this tyrant of a fellow."

"He is not a tyrant—I *do* love him, as much as I detest you," cried Virginia, shrinking from him with looks of horrour.

"Damme! Good actress! Put her on the stage when he is tired of her.—So, you won't come with us?—Good bye till we see you again. You're right, my girl, to be upon your good behaviour, may be you may get him to marry you, child!"

Virginia, upon hearing this speech, turned from the man who insulted her with a degree of haughty indignation, of which her gentle nature had never before appeared capable.

Mrs. Ormond hoped, that after the alarm was over, the circumstance would pass away from her pupil's mind; but on the contrary, it left the most forcible impression. Virginia became silent and melancholy, and whole hours were spent in reverie. Mrs. Ormond imagined, that notwithstanding Virginia's entire ignorance of the world, she had acquired from books

sufficient knowledge to be alarmed at the idea of being taken for Clarence Hervey's mistress. She touched upon this subject with much delicacy, and the answers that she received confirmed her opinion. Virginia had been inspired by romances with the most exalted notions of female delicacy and honour; but from her perfect ignorance, these were rather vague ideas than principles of conduct.

"We shall see Mr. Hervey to morrow; he has written me word that he will come from town, and spend the day with us."

"I shall be ashamed to see him after what has passed," said Virginia.

"You have no cause for shame, my dear; Mr. Hervey will try to discover the persons who insulted you, and he will punish them. They will never return here, you need not fear that. He is willing and able to protect you."

"Yes; of that I am sure. But what did that strange man mean, when he said——"

"What, my dear?"

"That, perhaps, Mr. Hervey would marry me."

Virginia pronounced these words with difficulty. Mrs. Ormond was silent, for she was much embarrassed. Virginia having conquered her first difficulty, seemed resolute to obtain an answer.

"You do not speak to me! Will you not tell me, dear Mrs. Ormond," said she hanging upon her fondly, "what did he mean?"

"What he said, I suppose."

"But he said, that if I behaved well, I might get Mr. Hervey to marry me. What did he mean by that?" said Virginia, in an accent of offended pride.

"He spoke very rudely and improperly, but it is not worth while to think of what he said, or what he meant."

"But, dear Mrs. Ormond, do not go away from me now, I never so much wished to speak to you in my whole life, and you turn away from me."

"Well, my love, well, what would you say?"

"Tell me one thing, only one thing, and you will set my heart at ease. Does Mr. Hervey *wish* me to be his wife?"

"I cannot tell you that, my dearest Virginia. Time will show us. Perhaps his heart has not yet decided."

"I wish it would decide," said Virginia, sighing deeply; "and I wish that strange man had not told me any thing about the matter; it has made me very unhappy."

She covered her eyes with her hand, but the tears trickled between her fingers, and rolled fast down her arm. Mrs. Ormond quite overcome by the sight of her distress, was no longer able to keep the secret, with which she had been entrusted by Clarence Hervey—"And after all," thought she, "Virginia will hear it from himself soon. I shall only spare her some unnecessary pain; it is cruel to see her thus, and to keep her in suspense. Besides, her weakness might be her ruin, in his opinion, if it were to extinguish all her energy, and deprive her of the very power of pleasing. How wan she looks,

and how heavy are those sleepless eyes! She is not, indeed, in a condition to meet him, when he comes to us to morrow: if she had some hopes, she would revive, and appear with her natural ease and grace."

"My sweet child," said Mrs. Ormond, "I cannot bear to see you so melancholy; consider, Mr. Hervey will be with us to morrow, and it will give him a great deal of pain to see you so."

"Will it? Then I will try to be very gay."

Mrs. Ormond was so delighted to see Virginia smile, that she could not forbear adding, "The strange man was not wrong in every thing he said; you *will*, one of these days, be Mr. Hervey's wife."

"That I am sure," said Virginia, bursting again into tears—"that I am sure I do not wish, unless *he* does."

"He does, he does, my dear—do not let this delicacy of yours, which has been wound up too high, make you miserable. He thought of you, he loved you long and long ago."

" He is very good, too good," said Virginia sobbing.

" Nay, what is more—for I can keep nothing from you—he has been educating you all this time on purpose for his wife, and he only waits till your education is finished, and till he is sure that you feel no repugnance for him."

" I should be very ungrateful if I felt any repugnance for him," said Virginia; " I feel none."

" O, that you need not assure me," said Mrs. Ormond.

" But I do not wish to marry him—I do not wish to marry."

" You are a modest girl to say so, if you did; and this modesty will make you ten times more amiable, especially in Mr. Hervey's eyes. Heaven forbid that I should lessen it!"

The next morning Virginia, who always slept in the same room with Mrs. Ormond, wakened her, by crying out in her sleep with a voice of terrour—" O, save

him!—save Mr. Hervey!—Mr. Hervey! —forgive me! forgive me!"——

Mrs. Ormond drew back the curtain, and saw Virginia lying fast asleep; her beautiful face convulsed with agony.

"He's dead!—Mr. Hervey!"—cried she in a voice of exquisite distress: then starting up, and stretching out her arms, she uttered a piercing cry, and awoke.

"My love, you have been dreaming frightfully," said Mrs. Ormond.

"Is Mr. Hervey alive? Where is he? Has he forgiven me? Is it all a dream?" cried Virginia, looking round fearfully.

"All a dream, my dear!" said Mrs. Ormond, taking her hand.

"I am very, very glad of it!—Let me breathe.—It was, indeed, a frightful dream!"

"Your hand still trembles," said Mrs. Ormond; "let me put back this hair from your poor face, and you will grow cool, and forget this foolish dream."

"No; I must tell it you. I ought to tell it you. But it was all so confused, I

can recollect only some parts of it. First, I remember that I thought I was not myself, but the Virginia that we were reading of the other night; and I was somewhere in the Isle of France. I thought the place was something like the forest where my grandmother's cottage used to be, only there were high mountains and rocks, and cocoa trees and plantains."

"Such as you saw in the prints of that book?"

"Yes; only beautiful, beautiful beyond description! And it was moonlight, brighter and clearer than any moonlight I ever before had seen; and the air was fresh, yet perfumed; and I was seated under the shade of a plane-tree, beside Virginia's fountain."

"Just as you are in your picture?"

"Yes; but Paul was seated beside me."

"Paul!" said Mrs. Ormond, smiling; "that is Mr. Hervey."

"No; not Mr. Hervey's face, though it spoke with his voice—this is what I

thought that I must tell you. It was another figure: it seemed a real living person: it knelt at my feet, and spoke to me so kindly, so tenderly; and just as it was going to kiss my hand, Mr. Hervey appeared, and I started terribly, for I was afraid he would be displeased, and that he would think me *ungrateful*; and he was displeased, and he called me ungrateful Virginia, and frowned; and then I gave him my hand, and then every thing changed, I do not know how suddenly, and I was in a place like the great p int of the cathedral, which Mr. Hervey showed me; and there were crowds of people—I was almost stifled. *You* pulled me on, as I remember; and Mr. Moreton was there, standing upon some steps, by what you called the altar; and then we knelt down before him, and Mr. Hervey was putting a ring on my finger; but there came suddenly from the crowd that strange man, who was here the other day, and he dragged me along with him, I don't know how or where, swiftly down precipices,

whilst I struggled, and at last fell. Then all changed again, and I was in a magnificent field, covered with cloth of gold, and there were beautiful ladies seated under canopies; and I thought it was a tournament, such as I have read of, only more splendid; and two knights, clad in complete armour, and mounted on fiery steeds, were engaged in single combat, and they fought furiously, and I thought they were fighting for me. One of the knights wore black plumes in his helmet, and the other white; and, as he was passing by me, the vizor of the knight of the white plumes was let down, and I saw it was——"

"Clarence Hervey?" said Mrs. Ormond.

"No; still the same figure that knelt to me; and I wished him to be victorious. And he was victorious. And he unhorsed his adversary, and stood over him with his drawn sword; and then I saw that the knight in the black plumes was Mr. Hervey, and I ran to save him, but I could not. I saw him weltering in his blood,

and I heard him say, 'Perfidious, *ungrateful* Virginia! you are the cause of my death!'—and I screamed, I believe, and that awakened me."

"Well, it is only a dream, my love," said Mrs Ormond; "Mr. Hervey is safe: get up, and dress yourself, and you will soon see him."

"But was it not wrong and *ungrateful*, to wish that the knight in the white plumes should be victorious?"

"Your poor little head is full of nothing but these romances, and love for Mr. Hervey. It is your love for him, that makes you fear that he will be jealous. But he is not so simple as you are. He will forgive you for wishing that the knight in the white plumes should be victorious, especially as you did not know that the other knight was Mr. Hervey. Come, my love, dress yourself, and think no more of these foolish dreams, and all will go well."

CHAPTER XXVII.

A DISCOVERY.

INSTEAD of the open, childish, affectionate familiarity, with which Virginia used to meet Clarence Hervey, she now received him with reserved, timid embarrassment. Struck by this change in her manner, and alarmed by the dejection of her spirits, which she vainly strove to conceal, he eagerly inquired, from Mrs. Ormond, into the cause of this alteration.

Mrs. Ormond's answers, and her account of all that had passed during his absence, increased his anxiety. His indignation was roused, by the insult which Virginia had been offered by the strangers who had scaled the garden-wall. All his endeavours, to discover who they were, proved ineffectual; but, lest they should

venture to repeat their visit, he removed her from Windsor, and took her directly to Twickenham. Here he staid with her and Mrs. Ormond some days, to determine by his own observation, how far the representations, that had been made to him were just. Till this period he had been persuaded, that Virginia's regard for him was rather that of gratitude, than of love; and with this opinion, he thought, that he had no reason seriously to reproach himself for the imprudence, with which he had betrayed the partiality that he felt for her, in the beginning of their acquaintance. He flattered himself, that even should she have discerned his intentions, her heart would not repine at any alteration in his sentiments: and if her happiness were uninjured, his reason told him that he was not in honour bound to constancy. The case was now altered.—Unwilling as he was to believe, he could no longer doubt.—Virginia could neither meet his eyes, nor speak to him without a degree of embarrassment, which she had

not sufficient art to conceal: she trembled whenever he came near her, and if he looked grave, or forbore to take notice of her, she would burst into tears. At other times, contrary to the natural indolence of her character, she would exert herself to please him, with surprising energy; she learned every thing that he wished; her capacity seemed suddenly to unfold. For an instant, Clarence flattered himself, that both her fits of melancholy and of exertion might arise from a secret desire to see something of that world, from which she had been secluded. One day, he touched upon this subject, to see what effect it would produce; but, contrary to his expectations, she seemed to have no desire to quit her retirement: she did not wish, she said, for amusements such as he described; she did not wish to go into the world.

It was during the time of his passion for her, that Clarence had her picture painted in the character of St. Pierre's Virginia. It happened to be in the room

in which they were now conversing, and when she spoke of loving a life of retirement, Clarence accidentally cast his eyes upon the picture, and then upon Virginia. She turned away—sighed deeply; and when, in a tone of kindness, he asked her, if she were unhappy, she hid her face in her hands, and made no answer.

Mr. Hervey could not be insensible to her distress or to her delicacy. He saw her bloom fading daily, her spirits depressed, her existence a burden to her, and he feared, that his own imprudence had been the cause of all this misery.

"I have taken her out of a situation in which she might have spent her life usefully and happily; I have excited false hopes in her mind, and now she is a wretched and useless being; I have won her affections; her happiness depends totally upon me; and can I forsake her? Mrs. Ormond says, that she is convinced Virginia would not survive the day of my marriage with another. I am not disposed to believe, that girls often die or destroy

themselves for love; nor am I coxcomb enough to suppose, that love for me must be extraordinarily desperate. But here's a girl, who is of a melancholy temperament, who has a great deal of natural sensibility, whose affections have all been concentrated, who has lived in solitude, whose imagination has dwelled, for a length of time, upon a certain set of ideas, who has but one object of hope; in such a mind, and in such circumstances, passion may rise to a paroxysm of despair."

Pity, generosity, and honour, made him resolve not to abandon this unfortunate girl; though he felt, that every time he saw Virginia, his love for Belinda increased. It was this struggle in his mind, betwixt love and honour, which produced all the apparent inconsistency and irresolution, that puzzled lady Delacour, and perplexed Belinda. The lock of beautiful hair, which so unluckily fell at Belinda's feet, was Virginia's; he was going to take it to the painter, who had made the hair in her picture considerably

too dark. How this picture got into the exhibition must now be explained.

Whilst Mr. Hervey's mind was in that painful state of doubt, which has just been described, a circumstance happened, that promised him some relief from his embarrassment. Mr. Moreton, the clergyman who use to read prayers every Sunday for Mrs. Ormond and Virginia, did not come one Sunday at the usual time: the next morning, he called on Mr. Hervey, with a face that showed he had something of importance to communicate.

"I have hopes, my dear Clarence," said he, "that I have found out your Virginia's father. Yesterday, a musical friend of mine persuaded me to go with him, to hear the singing at the Asylum for children, in St. George's Fields. There is a girl there, who has, indeed, a charming voice—but that's not to the present purpose. After church was over, I happened to be one of the last that staid; for I am too old, to love bustling through a crowd.

Perhaps, as you are impatient, you think that's nothing to the purpose; and yet it is, as you shall hear. When the congregation had almost left the church, I observed, that the children of the Asylum remained in their places, by order of one of the governors; and a middle aged gentleman went round amongst the elder girls, examined their countenances with care, and inquired, with much anxiety, their ages, and every particular relative to their parents. The stranger held a miniature picture in his hand with which he compared each face. I was not near enough to him," continued Mr. Moreton, "to see the miniature distinctly; but, from the glimpse I caught of it, I thought that it was like your Virginia, though it seemed to be the portrait of a child but four or five years old. I understand, that this gentleman will be at the Asylum again next Sunday; I heard him express a wish to see some of the girls, who happened last Sunday to be absent."

"Do you know this gentleman's name, or where he lives?" said Clarence.

"I know nothing of him," replied Mr. Moreton, "except that he seems fond of painting, for he told one of the directors, who was looking at his miniature, that it was remarkably well painted, and that, in his happier days, he had been something of a judge of the art."

Impatient to see the stranger, who, he did not doubt, was Virginia's father, Clarence Hervey went the next Sunday to the Asylum; but no such gentleman appeared, and all that he could learn respecting him was, that he had applied to one of the directors of the institution, for leave to see and question the girls, in hopes of finding amongst them his lost daughter; that in the course of the week, he had seen all those who were not at church the last Sunday. None of the directors knew any thing more concerning him; but the porter remarked, that he came in a very handsome coach, and one of the girls of the Asylum said, that he gave her half a

guinea, because she was a little like *his poor Rachel, who was dead*; but that he had added, with a sigh, " This cannot be my daughter, for she is only thirteen, and my girl, if she be now living, must be nearly eighteen."

The age, the name, every circumstance confirmed Mr. Hervey in the belief, that this stranger was the father of Virginia, and he was disappointed and provoked by having missed the opportunity of seeing or speaking to him. It occurred to Clarence, that the gentleman might probably visit the Foundling Hospital, and thither he immediately went, to make inquiries. He was told that a person, such as he described, had been there about a month before, and had compared the face of the oldest girls with a little picture of a child: that he gave money to several of the girls, but that they did not know his name, or any thing more about him.

Mr. Hervey now inserted proper advertisements in all the papers, but without producing any effect. At last, recollecting

what Mr. Moreton told him of the stranger's love of pictures, he determined to put his portrait of Virginia into the exhibition, in hopes that the gentleman might go there and ask some questions about it, which might lead to a discovery. The young artist, who had painted this picture, was under particular obligations to Clarence, and he promised that he would faithfully comply with his request, to be at Somerset-house regularly every morning, as soon as the exhibition opened; that he would stay there till it closed, and watch whether any of the spectators were particularly struck with the portrait of Virginia. If any person should ask questions respecting the picture, he was to let Mr. Hervey know immediately, and to give the inquirer his address.

Now it happened, that the very day when lady Delacour and Belinda were at the exhibition, the painter called Clarence aside, and informed him, that a gentleman had just inquired from him very eagerly, whether the picture of Virginia was a por-

trait. This gentleman proved to be, not the stranger who had been at the Asylum, but an eminent jeweller, who told Mr. Hervey, that his curiosity about the picture arose merely from it's striking likeness to a miniature, which had been lately left at his house to be new set. It belonged to a Mr. Hartley, a gentleman who had made a considerable fortune in the West Indies, but who was prevented from enjoying his affluence by the loss of an only daughter, of whom the miniature was a portrait, taken when she was not more than four or five years old. When Clarence heard all this, he was extremely impatient to know where Mr. Hartley was to be found; but the jeweller could only tell him, that the miniature had been called for the preceding day by Mr. Hartley's servant, who said his master was leaving town in a great hurry to go to Portsmouth, to join the West India fleet, which was to sail with the first favourable wind.

Clarence determined immediately to follow him to Portsmouth; he had not a

moment to spare, for the wind was actually favourable, and his only chance of seeing Mr. Hartley was by reaching Portsmouth as soon as possible. This was the cause of his taking leave of Belinda in such an abrupt manner: painful indeed were his feelings at that moment, and great the difficulty he felt in parting with her, without giving any explanation of his conduct, which must have appeared to her capricious and mysterious. He was aware, that he had explicitly to lady Delacour avowed his admiration of miss Portman, and that in a thousand instances he had betrayed his passion. Yet of her love he dared not trust himself to think, whilst his affairs were in this doubtful state. He had, it is true, some faint hopes, that a change in Virginia's situation might produce an alteration in her sentiments, and he resolved to decide his own conduct by the manner in which she should behave, if her father should be found, and she should become heiress to a considerable fortune. New views might then open to her imagi-

nation: the world, the fashionable world in all it's glory, would be before her; her beauty and fortune would attract a variety of admirers, and Clarence thought, that perhaps her partiality for him might become less exclusive, when she had more opportunities of choice. If her love arose merely from circumstances, with circumstances it would change; if it were only a disease of the imagination, induced by her seclusion from society, it might be cured by mixing with the world; and then he would be at liberty to follow the dictates of his own heart, and declare his attachment to Belinda.' But if he should find that change of situation made no alteration in Virginia's sentiments, if her happiness should absolutely depend upon the realization of those hopes, which he had imprudently excited, he felt that he should be bound to her by all the laws of justice and honour; laws which no passion could tempt him to break. Full of these ideas, he hurried to Portsmouth in pursuit of Virginia's father. The first question he

asked, upon his arrival there, may easily be guessed.

"Has the West India fleet sailed?"

"No: it sails to morrow morning," was the answer.

He hastened instantly to make inquiries for Mr. Hartley. No such person could be found, no such gentleman was to be heard of any where. *Hartley*, he was sure, was the name which the jeweller mentioned to him, but it was in vain that he repeated it, no Mr. Hartley was to be heard of at Portsmouth, except a pawnbroker. At last, a steward of one of the West India-men recollected, that a gentleman of that name came over with him in the Effingham, and that he talked of returning in the same vessel to the West Indies, if he should ever leave England again.

"But we have heard nothing of him since, sir," said the steward. "No passage is taken for him with us."

"And my life to a china orange," cried a sailor who was standing by, "he's gor to kingdom come, or more likely to Be

lam afore this, for he was plaguy crazy in his timbers, and his head wanted righting I take it, if it was he, Jack, who used to walk the deck, you know, with a bit of a picture in his hand, to which he seemed to be mumbling his prayers from morning to night. There's no use in sounding for him, master, he's down in Davy's locker long ago, or stowed into th etight waistcoat before this time o'day."

Notwithstanding this knowing sailor's opinion, Clarence would not desist from his sounding, because having so lately heard of him at different places, he could not believe that he was gone either into Davy's locker, or to Bedlam. He imagined that, by some accident, Mr. Hartley had been detained upon the road to Portsmouth; and in the expectation that he would certainly arrive before the fleet should sail, Clarence waited with tolerable patience. He waited, however, in vain; he saw the Effingham and the whole fleet sail—no Mr. Hartley arrived. As he hailed

one of the boats of the Effingham, which was rowing out with some passengers, who had been too late to get on board, his friend, the sailor, answered:

"We've no crazy man here: I told you master, he'd never go out no more in the Effingham. He's where I said, master, you'll find, or no where."

Mr. Hervey remained some days at Portsmouth, after the fleet had sailed, in hopes that he might yet obtain some information; but none could be had: neither could any farther tidings be obtained from the jeweller, who had first mentioned Mr. Hartley. Despairing of success in the object of his journey, he however determined to delay his return to town, for some time, in hopes that absence might efface the impression which had been made on the heart of Virginia. He made a tour along the picturesque coasts of Dorset and Devonshire, and it was during this excursion, that he wrote the letters to lady Delacour which have so often been mentioned. He endeavoured to dissipate his

thoughts by new scenes and employments; but all his ideas involuntarily centred in Belinda. If he saw new characters, he compared them with hers, or considered how far she would approve or condemn them. The books that he read were perused with a constant reference to what she would think or feel; and during his whole journey he never beheld any beautiful prospect, without wishing that it could at the same instant be seen by Belinda. If her name were mentioned but once in his letters, it was because he dared not trust himself to speak of her; she was for ever present to his mind: but whilst he was writing to lady Delacour, her idea pressed more strongly upon his heart; he recollected, that it was she who first gave him a just insight into her ladyship's real character; he recollected that she had joined with him in the benevolent design of reconciling her to lord Delacour, and of creating in her mind a taste for domestic happiness. This remembrance operated powerfully to excite him to fresh exertions, and the eloquence

which touched lady Delacour so much i these "*edifying*" letters as she called them, was in fact inspired by Belinda.

Whenever he thought distinctly upon his future plans, Virginia's attachment, and the hopes which he had imprudently inspired, appeared insuperable obstacles to his union with miss Portman; but, in more sanguine moments, he flattered himself with a confused notion, that these difficulties would vanish. Great were his surprise and alarm, when he received that letter of lady Delacour's, in which she announced the probability of Belinda's marriage with Mr. Vincent. By one of those small unfortunate accidents, which sometimes occur in the most important moments of our lives, he did not receive this letter, till nearly a fortnight after it should have come to his hands. The instant he received it, he set out on his way home; he travelled with all that expedition, which money can command in England: his first thought, and first wish, when he arrived in town, were to go to lady Delacour's; but

he checked his impatience, and proceeded immediately to Twickenham, to have his fate decided by Virginia. It was with the most painful sensations that he saw her again. The accounts, which he received from Mrs. Ormond, convinced him, that absence had produced none of the effects, which he expected on the mind of her pupil. Mrs. Ormond was naturally both of an affectionate disposition and a timid temper; she had become excessively fond of Virginia, and her anxiety was more than in proportion to her love; it sometimes balanced and even overbalanced her regard and respect for Clarence Hervey himself. When he spoke of his attachment to Belinda, and of his doubts respecting Virginia, she could no longer restrain her emotion.

"O! indeed! Mr. Hervey," said she, "this is no time for reasoning and doubting. No man in his senses—no man, who is not wilfully blind, could doubt her being distractedly fond of you."

"I am sorry for it," said Clarence.

"And why? O, why, Mr. Hervey? Don't you recollect the time, when you were all impatience to call her yours—when you thought her the most charming creature in the whole world?"

"I had not seen Belinda Portman then."

"And I wish to Heaven you never had seen her; but O, surely, Mr. Hervey, you will not desert my Virginia!—Must her health, her happiness, her reputation, all be the sacrifice?"

"Reputation, Mrs. Ormond!"

"Reputation, Mr. Hervey!—you do not know in what light she is considered here; nor did I till lately. But I tell you her reputation is injured, fatally injured. It is whispered, and more than whispered every where, that she is your mistress. A woman came here the other day with the bullfinch, and she looked at me, and spoke in such an extraordinary way, that I was shocked more than I can express. I need not tell you all the particulars; it is enough that I have made inquiries, and am sure, too sure, of what I say, that no-

thing but your marriage with Virginia can save her reputation; or—"

Mrs. Ormond stopped short, for at this instant Virginia entered the room, walking in her slow manner, as if she were in a deep reverie.

"Since my return," said Clarence, in an embarrassed voice, "I have scarcely heard a syllable from miss St. Pierre's lips."

"*Miss St. Pierre!*—He used to call me Virginia," said she, turning to Mrs. Ormond—"he is angry with me—He used to call me Virginia."

"But you were a child then, you know, my love," said Mrs. Ormond.

"And I wish I was still a child," said Virginia—Then, after a long pause, she approached Mr. Hervey with extreme timidity, and opening a port folio, which lay on the table, she said to him:

"If you are at leisure—if I do not interrupt you—would you look at these drawings; though they are not worth your seeing, except as proofs, that I *can* conquer my natural indolence?"

The drawings were views, which she had painted from memory, of scenes in the New Forest, near her grandmother's cottage. That cottage was drawn with an exactness, that proved how fresh it was in her remembrance. Many recollections rushed forcibly into Clarence Hervey's mind, at the sight of this cottage. The charming image of Virginia, as it first struck his fancy; the smile, the innocent smile, with which she offered him the finest rose in her basket; the stern voice, in which her grandmother spoke to her; the prophetic fears of her protectress; the figure of the dying woman; the solemn promise he made to her; all recurred, in rapid succession, to his memory.

"You don't seem to like that," said Virginia: and then putting another drawing into his hands, "perhaps this may please you better."

"They are beautiful; they are surprisingly well done!" exclaimed he.

"I knew he would like them! I told

you so!" cried Mrs. Ormond, in a triumphant tone.

"You see," said Virginia, "that though you have heard scarcely a syllable from miss St. Pierre's lips, since your return, yet she has not been unmindful of your wishes in your absence. You told her, some time ago, that you wished she would try to improve in drawing. She has done her best. But do not trouble yourself to look at them any longer," said Virginia, taking one of her drawings from his hand; "I merely wanted to show you, that though I have no genius, I have some—"

Her voice faltered so, that she could not pronounce the word *gratitude*.

Mrs. Ormond pronounced it for her; and added, "I can answer for it, that Virginia is not ungrateful."

"Ungrateful!" repeated Clarence; "Who ever thought her so! Why did you put these ideas into her mind?"

Virginia, resting her head on Mrs. Ormond's shoulder, wept bitterly.

"You have worked upon her sensibility,

till you have made her miserable," cried Clarence, angrily. "Virginia, listen to me: look at me," said he, affectionately taking her hand: but she pressed closer to Mrs. Ormond, and would not raise her head. "Do not consider me as your master—your tyrant—do not imagine, that I think you ungrateful!"

"O, I am—I am—I am ungrateful to you," cried she, sobbing; "but Mrs. Ormond never told me so: do not blame her: she has never worked upon my sensibility. Do you think," said she, looking up, while a transient expression of indignation passed over her countenance—"do you think I cannot *feel* without having been taught?"

Clarence uttered a deep sigh.

"But if you feel too much, my dearest Virginia—if you give way to your feelings, in this manner," said Mrs. Ormond, "you will make both yourself and Mr. Hervey unhappy!"

"Heaven forbid! The first wish of my soul is—" She paused—"I should be

the most ungrateful wretch in the world, if I were to make him unhappy."

"But if he sees you miserable, Virginia?"

"Then he shall not see it," said she, wiping the tears from her face.

"To imagine that you were unhappy, and that you concealed it from us, would be still worse," said Clarence.

"But why should you imagine it?" replied Virginia; "you are too good, too kind: but do not fancy that I am not happy; I am sure I ought to be happy."

"Do you regret your cottage?" said Clarence: "these drawings show how well you remember it."

Virginia coloured; and with some hesitation answered: "Is it my fault, if I cannot forget?"

"You were happier then, Virginia, than you are now, you will confess," said Mrs. Ormond, who was not a woman of refined delicacy, and who thought, that the best chance she had of working upon Mr. Hervey's sense of honour was by making

it plain to him, how much her pupil's affections were engaged.

Virginia made no answer to this question, and her silence touched Clarence more than any thing she could have said. When Mrs. Ormond repeated her question, he relieved the trembling girl, by saying:

"My dear Mrs. Ormond, confidence must be won, not demanded."

"I have no right to insist upon confessions, I know," said Mrs. Ormond; "but—"

"Confessions—I do not wish to conceal any thing; but I think, sincerity is not *always*, in our sex, consistent with—I mean—I don't know what I mean—what I say—or what I ought to say," cried Virginia; and she sunk down on a sofa, in extreme confusion.

"Why will you agitate her, Mrs. Ormond, in this manner?" said Mr. Hervey, with an expression of sudden anger. It was succeeded by a look of such tender compassion for Virginia, that Mrs. Ormond rejoiced to have excited his anger: at any

price, she wished to serve her beloved pupil.

"Do not be in the least apprehensive, my dear Virginia, that we should take ungenerous advantage of the openness and simplicity of your character," said Mr. Hervey.

"O, no, no; I cannot, do not apprehend any thing ungenerous from you—you are—you ever have been my best, my most generous friend! But I fear that I have not the simplicity of character, the openness that you imagine: and yet I am sure—I wish, from the bottom of my heart—I wish to do right, if I knew how. But there is not one, no not one person in the whole world," continued she, her eyes moving from Mrs. Ormond to Mr. Hervey, and from him to Mrs. Ormond again—"Not one person in the whole world I dare—I ought to lay my heart open to. I have, perhaps, said more than is proper already. But this I know," added she in a firm tone, rising, and addressing herself to Clarence: "*You* shall never be made unhap-

py by me. And do not think about my happiness so much," said she, forcing a smile: "I am, I will be perfectly happy: only let me always know your wishes, your sentiments, your feelings, and by them I will, as I ought, regulate mine."

"Amiable, charming, generous girl!" cried Clarence.

"Take care," said Mrs. Ormond; "take care, Virginia, lest you promise more than you can perform. Wishes, and feelings, and sentiments, are not to be so easily regulated."

"I did not, I believe, say it was easy; but I hope it is possible," replied Virginia; "I promise nothing but what I am able to perform."

"I doubt it," said Mrs. Ormond, shaking her head; "you *are*—you *will* be perfectly happy. O, Virginia, my love, do not deceive yourself; do not deceive us so terribly. I am sorry to put you to the blush; but"—

"Not a word more, my dear madam, I beg—I insist," said Mr. Hervey, in a com-

manding tone; but, for the first time in her life, regardless of him, she persisted.

"I only ask you to call to mind, my dearest Virginia," said she, taking her hand, "the morning that you screamed in your sleep, the morning when you told me the frightful dream—Were you perfectly happy then?"

"It is easy to force my thoughts from me," said Virginia, withdrawing her hand from Mrs. Ormond; "but it is cruel to do so." And with an air of offended dignity she passed them, and quitted the room.

"I wish to Heaven!" exclaimed Mrs. Ormond, "that miss Portman was married, and out of the way—I shall never forgive myself! We have used this poor girl cruelly amongst us: she loves you to distraction, and I have encouraged her passion, and I have betrayed her—O, fool that I was! I told her, that she would certainly be your wife."

"You have told her so!—Did I not charge you, Mrs. Ormond—

"Yes; but I could not help it, when I saw the sweet girl fading away—and, besides, I am sure she thought it, from your manner, long and long before I told it to her. Do you forget, how fond of her you were scarce one short year ago? And do you forget, how plainly you let her see your passion? O, how can you blame her, if she loves you, and if she is unhappy?"

"I blame no one but myself," cried Clarence, "I must abide by the consequences of my own folly.—Unhappy!—she shall not be unhappy; she does not deserve to be so."

He walked backward and forward, with hasty steps, for some minutes; then sat down and wrote a letter to Virginia.

When he had finished it, he put it into Mrs. Ormond's hands.

"Read it—seal it—give it to her—and let her answer be sent to town to me, at Dr. X.'s, in Clifford-street."

Mrs. Ormond clasped her hands, in an ecstacy of joy, as she glanced her eye over

the letter, for it contained an offer of his hand.

"This is like yourself; like what I always knew you to be, dear Mr. Hervey!" she exclaimed.

But her exclamation was lost upon him. When she looked up, to repeat her praises, she perceived he was gone. After the effort which he had made, he wished for time to tranquillize his mind, before he should again see Virginia: what her answer to this letter would be, he could not doubt; his fate was now decided, and he determined immediately to write to lady Delacour, to explain his situation; he felt, that he had not sufficient fortitude at this moment to make such an explanation in person. With all the strength of his mind, he endeavoured to exclude Belinda from his thoughts, but *curiosity*—(for he would suffer himself to call it by no other name)—curiosity to know whether she were actually engaged to Mr. Vincent, obtruded itself with such force, that it could not be resisted.

From doctor X—— he thought he could obtain full information, and he hastened immediately to town. When he got to Clifford street, he found that the doctor was not at home; his servant said, he might probably be met with at Mrs. Margaret Delacour's, as he usually finished his morning rounds at her house. Thither Mr. Hervey immediately went.

The first sound that he heard, as he went up her stairs, was the screaming of a macaw; and the first person he saw, through the open door of the drawing-room, was Helena Delacour. She was standing with her back to him, leaning over the macaw's cage, and he heard her say, in a joyful tone,

"Yes, though you do scream so frightfully, my pretty macaw, I love you as well as Marriott ever did. When my dear, good miss Portman sent this macaw— My dear aunt! here's Mr. Hervey!—You were just wishing to see him."

"Mr. Hervey," said the old lady, with a benevolent smile, "your little friend

Helena tells you truth. We were just wishing for you. I am sure it will give you pleasure to hear, that I am at last a convert to your opinion of lady Delacour. "She has given up all those that I used to call her rantipole acquaintance. She has reconciled herself to her husband, and to his friends; and Helena is to go home to live with her. Here is a charming note, I have just received from her! Dine with me on Thursday next, and you will meet her ladyship, and see a happy family party. You have had some share in *the reformation*, I know, and that was the reason I wished that you should be with us on Thursday. You see, I am not an obstinate old woman, though I was cross the first day I saw you at lady Anne Percival's.— I found I was mistaken in your character, and I am glad of it. But this note of lady Delacour's seems to have struck you dumb."

There were, indeed, a few words in this note, which deprived him, for some moments, of all power of utterance.

"The report you have heard (unlike most other reports) is perfectly well founded. Belinda Portman is going to be married to Mr. Vincent.—I will bring him with us on Thursday."

Mr. Hervey was relieved from the necessity of accounting to Mrs. Delacour for his sudden embarrassment, by the entrance of Dr. X—— and another gentleman, of whom, in the confusion of his mind, Clarence did not at first take any notice. Dr. X——, with his usual mixture of benevolence and raillery, addressed himself to Clarence, whilst the stranger took out of his pocket some papers, and in a low voice, entered earnestly into conversation with Mrs. Delacour.

"Now tell me, if you can, Clarence," said Dr. X——, "which of your three mistresses you like best? I think I left you some months ago in great doubt upon this subject.—Are you still in that philosophic state!"

"No;" said Clarence, "all doubts are over—I am going to be married."

"Bravo!—But you look as if you were going to be hanged. May I, as it will so soon be in the newspaper—may I ask the name of the fair lady?"

"Virginia St. Pierre—You shall know her history and mine when we are alone," said Mr. Hervey, lowering his voice.

"You need not lower your voice," said Dr. X——, "for Mrs. Delacour is, as you see, so much taken up with her own affairs, that she has no curiosity for those of her neighbours; and Mr. Hartley is as busy as——"

"Mr. who? Mr. Hartley! did you say," interrupted Clarence, eagerly turning his eyes upon the stranger, who was a middle-aged gentleman, exactly answering the description of the person who had been at the Asylum in search of his daughter.——

"Mr. Hartley! yes. What astonishes you so much?" said Dr. X——, calmly. "He is a West Indian. I met him in Cambridgeshire last summer, at his friend Mr. Horton's; he has been very generous

to the poor people, who suffered by the fire, and he is now consulting with Mrs. Delacour, who has an estate adjoining to Mr. Horton's, about her tenants, whose houses in the village were burnt. Now I have, in as few words and parentheses as possible, told you all I know of Mr. Hartley's history; but your curiosity still looks voracious."

"I want to know whether he has a miniature?" said Clarence, hastily. "Introduce me to him, for Heaven's sake, directly!"

"Mr. Hartley," cried the doctor, raising his voice, "give me leave to introduce my friend Mr. Hervey to you, and to your miniature picture, if you have one."

Mr. Hartley sighed profoundly, as he drew from his bosom a small portrait, which he put into Mr. Hervey's hands, saying, "Alas! sir, you cannot, I fear, give me any tidings of the original; it is the picture of a daughter, whom I have never seen since she was an infant—whom I never shall see again."

Clarence instantly knew it to be Virginia; but as he was upon the point of making some joyful exclamation, he felt Dr. X—— touch his shoulder, and looking up at Mr. Hartley, he saw in his countenance such strong workings of passion, that he prudently suppressed his own emotion, and calmly said—"It would be cruel, sir, to give you false hopes."

"It would kill me, it would kill me, sir!—or worse!—worse!—a thousand times worse!" cried Mr. Hartley, putting his hand to his forehead. "What," continued he, impatiently—"what was the meaning of the look you gave, when you first saw that picture? Speak, if you have any humanity! Did you ever see any one that resembles that picture?"

"I have seen, I think, a picture," said Clarence Hervey, "that has some resemblance to it."

"When? where?——"

"My good sir," said Dr. X——, "let me recommend it to you to consider, that there is scarcely any possibility of judging,

from the features of children, of what their faces may be when they grow up. Nothing can be more fallacious than these accidental resemblances between the pictures of children and of grown up people."

Mr. Hartley's countenance fell.

"But," added Clarence Hervey, "you will perhaps, sir, think it worth your while to see the picture of which I speak; you can see it at Mr. F——'s, the painter, in Newman-street; and I will accompany you thither whenever you please."

"This moment if you would have the goodness! My carriage is at the door; and Mrs. Delacour will be so kind to excuse——"

"O, make no apologies to me at such a time as this," said Mrs. Delacour.—"Away with you, gentlemen, as soon as you please; upon condition, that if you have any good news to tell, some of you will remember, in the midst of your joy, that such an old woman as Mrs. Margaret

Delacour exists, who loves to hear *good* news of those who deserve it."

It was so late in the day, when they got to Newman-street, that they were obliged to light candles. Trembling with eagerness, Mr. Hartley drew near, while Clarence held the light to the picture.

"It is so like," said he, looking at his miniature, "that I dare not believe my senses. Dr. X——, pray do you look. My head is so dizzy, and my eyes so—— What do you think, sir? What do you say, doctor?"

"That the likeness is certainly striking—but this seems to be a fancy piece."

"A fancy piece!" repeated Mr. Hartley, with terrour;—"Why then did you bring me here?—A fancy piece!"

"No, sir; it is a portrait," said Clarence; "and if you will be calm, I will tell you more.——"

"I will be calm;—only is she alive?"

"The lady, of whom this is the portrait, is alive," replied Clarence Hervey, who was obliged to exert his utmost com-

mand over himself, to maintain that composure which he saw was necessary; "the lady, of whom this is the portrait, is alive, and you shall see her to morrow."

"O, why not now? Cannot I see her now? I must see her to night: this instant, sir!"

"It is impossible," said Mr. Hervey, "that you should see her this instant, for she is some miles off, at Twickenham."

"It is too late to go thither now; you cannot think of it, Mr. Hartley," continued Dr. X——, in a tone of command, to which he yielded more readily than to reason.

Clarence had the presence of mind to recollect, that it would be necessary to prepare poor Virginia for this meeting, and he sent a messenger immediately, to request that Mrs. Ormond would communicate the intelligence with all the caution in her power.

The next morning, Mr. Hartley and Mr. Hervey set off together for Twickenham. In their way thither, Clarence gradually

confirmed Mr. Hartley in the belief, that Virginia was his daughter, by relating all the circumstances, that he had learned from her grandmother, and from Mrs. Smith, the farmer's wife, with whom she had formerly been acquainted: the name, the age, every particular, as it was disclosed, heightened his security and his joy.

For some time Mr. Hartley's mind was so intent that he could not listen to any thing, but at last Clarence engaged his attention, and suspended his anxiety, by giving him a history of his own connexion with Virginia, from the day of his first discovering her in the New Forest, to the letter which he had just written, to offer her his hand. The partiality, which it was suspected Virginia felt for him, was the only circumstance which he suppressed, because, notwithstanding all Mrs. Ormond had said, and all he had himself heard and seen, his obstinate incredulity required confirmation under her own hand, or positively from her own lips. He still fancied it was possible, that change

of situation might alter her views and sentiments; and he earnestly entreated, that she might be left entirely to her own decision. It was necessary to make this stipulation with her father; for, in the excess of his gratitude for the kindness, which Clarence had shown to her, he protested that he should look upon her as a monster, if she did not love him: he added, that if Mr. Hervey had not a farthing, he should prefer him to every man upon Earth; he, however promised, that he would conceal his wishes, and that his daughter should act entirely from the dictates of her own mind. In the fullness of his heart, he told Clarence all those circumstances of his conduct towards Virginia's mother, which had filled his soul with remorse. She was scarcely sixteen, when he ran away with her from a boarding-shool; he was at that time a gay officer, she a sentimental girl, who had been spoiled by early novel-reading. Her father had a small place at court lived beyond his fortune, educated his daughter, to whom he could give

no portion, as if she were to be heiress to a large estate; then died, and left his widow absolutely in penury. This widow was the old lady, who lived in the cottage in the New Forest. It was just at the time of her husband's death, and of her own distress, that she heard of the elopement of her daughter from school. Mr. Hartley's parents were so much incensed by the match, that he was prevailed upon to separate from his wife, and to go abroad, to push his fortune in the army. His marriage had been secret, his own friends disavowed it, notwithstanding the repeated, urgent entreaties of his wife, and of her mother, who was her only surviving relation. His wife, on her deathbed, wrote, to urge him to take charge of his daughter; and, to make the appeal stronger to his feelings, she sent him a picture of his little girl, who was then about four years old. Mr. Hartley, however, was intent upon forming a new connexion with the rich widow of a planter in Jamaica. He married the widow,

took possession of her fortune, and all his affections soon were fixed upon a son, for whom he formed, even from the moment of his birth, various schemes of aggrandizement. The boy lived till he was about ten years old, when he caught a fever, which at that time raged in Jamaica, and, after a few days illness, died. His mother was carried off by the same disease; and Mr. Hartley, left alone in the midst of his wealth, felt how insufficient it was to happiness. Remorse now seized him: in the desertion of his daughter he could not rest, but returned to England in search of her. To this neglected child he now looked forward, for the peace and happiness of the remainder of his life. Disappointment in all his inquiries for some months preyed upon his spirits to such a degree, that his intellects were at times disordered; this derangement was the cause of his not sooner recovering his child. He was in confinement, during the time that Clarence Hervey's advertisements were inserted in

the papers; and his illness was also the cause of his not going to Portsmouth, and sailing in the Effingham, as he had originally intended. So that the sailor's conjecture, after all, was right, or nearly so. The history of his connexion with Mr. Horton would be uninteresting to the reader; it is enough to say, that he was prevailed upon, by that gentleman, to spend some time in the country with him, for the recovery of his health. And it was there, that he became acquainted with Dr. X——, who introduced him, as we have seen, to Mrs. Margaret Delacour, at whose house he met Clarence Hervey. This is the most succinct account, that we can give of him and his affairs. His own account was ten times as long; but we spare the reader his incoherencies and reflections, because, perhaps, they are in a hurry to get to Twickenham, and to hear of his meeting with Virginia.

Mrs. Ormond found it no easy task, to prepare Virginia for the sight of Mr Hartley, Virginia had scarcely ever spoken

of her father; but the remembrance of things, which she had heard of him from her grandmother, was fresh in her mind; she had often pictured him in her fancy, and she had secretly nourished the hope, that she should not for ever be a *deserted child.* Mrs. Ormond had observed, that in those romances, of which Virginia was so fond, every thing that related to children, who were deserted by their parents, affected her strongly.

The belief in what the French call *la force du sang* was suited to her affectionate temper and ardent imagination; and it had taken full possession of her mind. The eloquence of romance persuaded her, that she should not only discover, but love her father with intuitive filial piety, and she longed to experience those *yearnings* of affection, of which she had read so much.

The first moment that Mrs. Ormond began to speak of Mr. Clarence Hervey's hopes of discovering her father, she was transported with joy.

"My *father*!—How delightful that word *father* sounds!—*My* father!—May I say, *my* father?—And will he own me, and will he love me, and will he give me his blessing, and will he fold me in his arms, and call me his daughter, his dear daughter?—O, how I shall love him? I will make it the whole business of my life to please him!"

"The *whole* business?" said Mrs. Ormond, smiling.

"Not the whole," said Virginia; "I hope my father will like Mr. Hervey. Did not you say, that he is rich? I wish that my father may be *very* rich."

"That is the last wish, that I should have expected to hear from you, my Virginia."

"But do you not know why I wish it? —that I may show my gratitude to Mr. Hervey."

"My dear child," said Mrs. Ormond, "these are most generous sentiments, and worthy of you; but do not let your ima-

gination run away with you at this rate—Mr. Hervey is rich enough."

"I wish he was poor," said Virginia, "that I might make him rich."

"He would not love you the better, my dear," said Mrs. Ormond, "if you had the wealth of the Indies. Perhaps, your father may not be rich; therefore, do not set your heart upon this idea."

Virginia sighed—fear succeeded to hope, and her imagination immediately reversed the bright picture that it had drawn.

"But I am afraid," said she, "that this gentleman is not my father—how disappointed I shall be! I wish you had never told me all this, my dear Mrs. Ormond."

"I would not have told it to you, if Mr. Hervey had not desired that I should; and, you may be sure, he would not have desired it, unless he had good reason to believe, that you would not be disappointed."

"But he is not sure—he does not say, he is quite sure. And, even if I were quite certain of his being my father, how

can I be certain that he will not disown me—he, who has deserted me so long? My grandmother, I remember, often used to say, that he had no natural affection."

"Your grandmother was mistaken then, for he has been searching for his child all over England, Mr. Hervey says; and he has almost lost his senses with grief, and with remorse."

"Remorse!"

"Yes; remorse—for, having so long deserted you, he fears, that you will hate him."

"Hate him!—Is it possible to hate a father?" said Virginia.

"He dreads, that you should never forgive him."

"Forgive him!—I have read of parents forgiving their children; but I never remember, to have read of a daughter forgiving her father.—*Forgive!* You should not have used that word. I cannot *forgive* my father; but I can love him, and I will make him quite forget all his sorrows—I mean, all his sorrows about me."

After this conversation, Virginia spent her time in imagining, what sort of person her father would be; whether he was like Mr. Hervey; what words he would say; where he would sit; whether he would sit beside her; and, above all, whether he would give her his blessing.

"I am afraid," said she, "of liking my father better than *any body else*."

"No danger of that, my dear," said Mrs. Ormond, smiling.

"I am glad of it, for it would be very wrong and *ungrateful*, to like any thing in this world so well as Mr. Hervey."

The carriage now came to the door: Mrs. Ormond instantly ran to the window, but Virginia had not power to move—her heart beat violently.

"Is he come?" said she.

"Yes, he is getting out of the carriage this moment!"

Virginia stood with her eyes eagerly fixed upon the door—"Hark!" said she, laying her hand upon Mrs. Ormond's arm to prevent her from moving—"Hush! that we may hear his voice."

She was breathless—No voice was to be heard—"They are not coming," said she, turning as pale as death. An instant afterward her colour returned—She heard the steps of two people coming up the stairs.

"His step!—Do you hear it?—Is it my father?"

Virginia's imagination was worked to the highest pitch, she could scarcely sustain herself: Mrs. Ormond supported her. At this instant her father appeared.

"My child!—the image of her mother!" exclaimed he—stopping short—he sunk upon a chair.

"My father!" cried Virginia, springing forward, and throwing herself at his feet.

"The voice of her mother!" said Mr. Hartley—"My daughter!—My long lost child!"

He tried to raise her, but could not; her arms were clasped round his knee, her face rested upon it, and when he

stooped to kiss her cheek; he found cold—She had fainted.

When she came to her senses, and found herself in her father's arms, she could scarcely believe that it was not a dream.

"Your blessing!—give me your blessing, and then I shall know that you are indeed my father!" cried Virginia, kneeling to him, and looking up with an enthusiastic expression of filial piety in her countenance.

"God bless you my sweet child!" said he, laying his hand upon her—"and God forgive your father!"

"My grandmother died without giving me her blessing," said Virginia, "but now I have been blessed by my father!—Happy! happy moment —O that she could look down from Heaven, and see us at this instant!"

Virginia was so much astonished and overpowered by this sudden discovery of a parent, and by the novelty of his first caresses, that after the first violent effervescence of her sensibility was over, she

might, to an indifferent spectator, have appeared stupid and insensible. Mrs. Ormond, though far from an indifferent spectator, was by no means a penetrating judge of the human heart: she seldom saw more than the external symptoms of feeling, and she was apt to be rather impatient with her friends, if theirs did not accord with her own.

"Virginia, my dear," said she, in rather a reproachful tone, "Mr. Hervey, you see, has left the room, on purpose to leave you at full liberty to talk to your father; and I am going—but you are so silent?"

"I have so much to say, and my heart is so full!"—said Virginia.

"Yes, I know you told me of a thousand things, that you had to say to your father, before you saw him."

"But now I see him, I have forgotten them all. I can think of nothing but of him."

"Of him and Mr. Hervey," said Mrs. Ormond.

"I was not thinking of Mr. Hervey at that moment," said Virginia, blushing.

"Well, my love, I will leave you to think and talk of what you please," said Mrs. Ormond, smiling significantly as she left the room.

Mr. Hartley folded his daughter in his arms with the fondest expressions of parental affection, and he was upon the point of telling her how much he approved of the choice of her heart; but he recollected his promise, and he determined to sound her inclinations farther, before he even mentioned the name of Clarence Hervey.

He began, by painting the pleasures of the world; that world, from which she had hitherto been secluded.

She heard him with simple indifference: not even her curiosity was excited.

He observed, that though she had no curiosity to see, it was natural that she must have some pleasure in the thoughts of being seen.

"What pleasure?" said Virginia.

"The pleasure of being admired and

ιoved: beauty and grace such as yours, my child, cannot be seen without commanding admiration and love."

"I do not want to be admired," replied Virginia, "and I want to be loved by those only whom I love."

"My dearest daughter, you shall be intirely your own mistress; I will never interfere, directly or indirectly, in the disposal of your heart."

At these last words, Virginia, who had listened to all the rest unmoved, took her father's hand, and kissed it repeatedly.

"Now that I have found you, my darling child, let me at least make you happy, if I can—it is the only atonement in my power; it will be the only solace of my declining years. All that wealth can bestow——"

"Wealth!" interrupted Virginia—"Then you have wealth?"

"Yes, my child—may it make you happy! that is all the enjoyment I expect from it.—It shall all be yours."

"And may I do what I please with it?

—O then it will indeed make me happy. I will give it all, all to Mr. Hervey. How delightful to have something to *give* to Mr. Hervey!"

"And had you never any thing to give to Mr. Hervey till now?"

"Never! never! he has given me every thing: now—O joyful day!—I can prove to him that Virginia is not ungrateful!"

"Dear generous girl," said her father, wiping the tears from his eyes, "what a daughter have I found! But tell me, my child," continued he, smiling; "do you think Mr. Hervey will be content if you give him only your fortune? Do you think that he would accept the fortune without the heart?—Nay, do not turn away that dear blushing face from me: remember it is *your father* who speaks to you.

"Mr. Hervey will not take your fortune without yourself, I am afraid—What shall we do? Must I refuse him your hand?"

"Refuse him! do you think that I could refuse him any thing, who has given me every thing?—I should be a monster

ndeed! There is no sacrifice I would not make, no exertion of which I am not capable, for Mr. Hervey's sake. But my dear father," said she, changing her tone, "he never asked for my hand till yesterday."

"But he had won your heart long ago, I see," thought her father.

"I have written an answer to his letter; will you look at it, and tell me if you approve of it."

"I do approve of it, my darling child; —I will not read it—I know what it must be—he has a right to the preference he has so nobly earned."

"O, he has! he has, indeed," cried Virginia, with an expression of strong feeling; "and now is the time to show him that I am not ungrateful."

"How I love you for this, my child!" cried her father, fondly embracing her. "This is exactly what I wished, though I did not dare to say so, till I was sure of your sentiments. Mr. Hervey charged

me to leave you intirely to yourself; he thought that your new situation might perhaps produce some change in your sentiments: I see he was mistaken, and I am heartily glad of it——But you are going to say something, my dear, do not let me interrupt you."

"I was only going to beg, that you would give this letter, my dear father, to Mr. Hervey. It is an answer to one, which he wrote to me when I was poor"—*and deserted*—she was near saying, but she stopped herself.

"I wish," continued she, "Mr. Hervey should know, that my sentiments are precisely the same now, that they have always been. Tell him," added she, proudly, "that he did me injustice, by imagining that my sentiments could alter with my situation. He little knows Virginia."

Clarence at this moment entered the room, and Mr. Hartley eagerly led his daughter to meet him.

"Take her hand," cried he—"you

ave her heart—you deserve it—and she has just been very angry with me for doubting.—But read her letter, that will speak better for her, and more to your satisfaction, no doubt, than I can."

Virginia hastily put the letter into Mr. Hervey's hand, and breaking from her father, retired to her own apartment.

With all the trepidation of a person, who feels that the happiness of his life is to be decided in a few moments, Clarence tore open Virginia's letter, and conscious that he was not able to command his emotion, he withdrew from her father's inquiring eyes. Mr. Hartley, however, saw nothing in this agitation, but what he thought natural to a lover, and he was delighted to perceive, that his daughter had inspired so strong a passion.

Virginia's letter contained but these few lines.

"Most happy shall I be, if the whole

of my future life can prove to you how deeply I feel your goodness.

"VIRGINIA ST. PIERRE."

End of C. Hervey's packet.

An acceptance so direct left Clarence no alternative: his fate was decided. He determined immediately to force himself to see Belinda and Mr. Vincent, for he fancied, that his mind would be more at ease, when he had convinced himself by ocular demonstration, that she was absolutely engaged to another; that consequently, even if he were free, he could have no chance of gaining her affections. There are moments, when we desire the conviction, which at another time would overwhelm us with despair. It was in this temper, that Mr. Hervey paid his visit to lady Delacour; but we have seen that he was unable to support, for many minutes, that philosophic composure, to which, at his first entrance into the room, he had

worked up his mind. The tranquillity, which he had expected would be the consequence of this visit, he was farther than ever from obtaining. The extravagant joy, with which lady Delacour received him, and an indescribable something in her manner, when she looked from him to Belinda, and from Belinda to Mr. Vincent, persuaded him her ladyship wished that he were in Mr. Vincent's place. The idea was so delightful, that his soul was entranced, and for a few minutes Virginia, and every thing that related to her, vanished from his remembrance. It was whilst he was in this state, that lady Delacour (as the reader may recollect) invited him into her lord's dressing-room, to tell her the contents of the packet, which had not then reached her hands. The request suddenly recalled him to his senses, but he felt that he was not at this moment able to trust himself to her ladyship's penetration; he therefore referred her to his letter for that explanation, which he dreaded to make in person, and he escaped from

Belinda's presence, resolving never mo[r]
to expose himself to such danger.

What effect his packet produced on lady Delacour's mind, and on Belinda's, we shall not at present stop to inquire; but having brought up Clarence Hervey's affairs to the present day, we shall continue his history.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

E O.

THOUGH Clarence Hervey was not much disposed to see either Virginia or her father, whilst he was in the state of perturbation, into which he had been thrown by his interview with Belinda; yet he did not delay to send his servant home with a note to Mrs Ormond to say, that he would meet Mr. Hartley, whenever he pleased, at his lawyer's, to make whatever arrangements might be necessary for proper settlements.

As he saw no possibility of receding with honour, he, with becoming resolution, desired to urge things forward as fast as possible, and to strengthen in his mind the sense of the *necessity* of the sacrifice, that he was bound to make. His passions were

naturally impetuous; but he had, by persevering efforts, brought them under the subjection of his reason. His power over himself was now to be put to a severe trial.

As he was going to town, he met lord Delacour, who was riding in the park: he was extremely intent upon his own thoughts, and was anxious to pass unnoticed. In former times, this would have been the most feasible thing imaginable; for lord Delacour used to detest the sight of Clarence Hervey, whom he considered as the successor of colonel Lawless in his lady's favour; but his opinion and his feelings had been entirely changed by the perusal of those letters, which were perfumed with attar of roses: even this perfume had from that association become agreeable to him. He now accosted Clarence, with a warmth and cordiality in his manner, that at any other moment must have pleased, as much as it surprised him. But Clarence was not in a humour to enter into conversation.

"You seem to be in haste, Mr. Hervey," said his lordship, observing his impatience; "but, as I know your good nature, I shall make no scruple to detain you a quarter of an hour."

As he spoke, he turned his horse, and rode with Clarence, who looked as if he wished that his lordship had been more scrupulous, and that he had not such a reputation for good nature.

"You will not refuse me this quarter of an hour, I am sure," continued lord Delacour, "when you hear that, by favouring me with your attention, you may perhaps materially serve an old—or rather a young friend of yours, and one whom, I once fancied, was a particular favourite—I mean, miss Belinda Portman."

At the name of Belinda Portman, Clarence Hervey became all attention: he assured his lordship, that he was in no haste; and all his difficulty now was, to moderate the eagerness of his curiosity.

"We can take a turn or two in the park, as well as any where," said his lord-

ship. "Nobody will overhear us; a the sooner you know what I have to say the better."

"Certainly," said Clarence.

The most malevolent person upon Earth could not have tried poor Clarence's patience, more than good natured lord Delacour contrived to do, with the best intentions possible, by his habitual circumlocution.

He descanted at length upon the difficulties, as the world goes, of meeting with a confidential friend, whom it is prudent to trust, in any affair that demands delicacy, honour, and address. Men of talents, were often, he observed, devoid of integrity, and men of integrity devoid of talents. When he had obtained Hervey's assent to this proposition, he next paid him sundry handsome, but long-winded compliments: then he complimented himself, for having just thought of Mr. Hervey as the fittest person he could apply to: then he congratulated himself upon his good luck, in meeting

ith the very man he was just thinking of. At last, after Clarence had returned thanks for all his kindness, and had given assent to all his lordship's truisms, the substance of the business came out.

Lord Delacour informed Mr. Hervey, "that he had been lately commissioned, by lady Delacour, to discover what attractions drew a Mr. Vincent so constantly to Mrs. Luttridge's——"

Here he was going to explain who Mr. Vincent was; but Clarence assured him that he knew perfectly well that he had been a ward of Mr. Percival's: that he was a West Indian of large fortune, &c.

"And a lover of miss Portman's—that is the most material part of the story to *me*," continued lord Delacour; "for otherwise, you know, Mr. Vincent would be no more to me than any other gentleman. But in that point of view—I mean as a lover of Belinda Portman, and I may say, not quite unlikely to be her husband—he is highly interesting to my lady Delacour, and to me, and to you, as miss Portman's well-wisher, doubtless."

"Doubtless!" was all Mr. Hervey could reply.

"Now, you must know," continued his lordship, "that lady Delacour has, for a woman, an uncommon share of penetration, and can put things together in a wonderful way: in short, it has come to her —(my lady Delacour's)—knowledge, that before miss Portman was at Oakly-park last summer, and after she left it this autumn, Mr. Vincent was a constant visitor at Mrs. Luttridge's, whilst at Harrowgate, and used to play high (though unknown to the Percivals of course) at billiards, with Mr. Luttridge—a *man*, I confess, I disliked *always*, even when I carried the election for them.—— But no matter: it is not from enmity I speak now. But it is very well known, that Luttridge has but a small fortune, and yet lives as if he had a large one; and all the young men, who like high play, are sure to be well received at his house.— Now, I hope Mr. Vincent is not well received on that footing.

"Since my lady Delacour and I have been such good friends," continued his lordship, "I have dropped all connexion with the Luttridges, so cannot go there myself; moreover, I do not wish to be tempted to lose any more thousands to the lady: but you never play, and you are not likely to be tempted to it now; so you will oblige me and lady Delacour, if you will go to Luttridge's to night; she is always charmed to see you, and you will easily discover how the land lies. Mr. Vincent is certainly a very agreeable, open-hearted young man; but, if he game, God forbid that miss Portman should ever be his wife!"

"God forbid!" said Clarence Hervey.

"The man," resumed lord Delacour "must, in my opinion, be very superior indeed, who is deserving of Belinda Portman. O! Mr. Hervey, you do not—you cannot know her merit, as I do. It is one thing, sir, to see a fine girl in a ball-room, and another—quite another—to live in the house with her for months, an

to see her, as I have seen Belinda Portman, in every-day-life, as one may call it. *Then* it is one can judge of the real temper, manners, and characters; and never woman had so sweet a temper, such charming manners, such a fair, open, generous, decided, yet gentle character, as this miss Portman."

"Your lordship speaks *con amore*," said Clarence.

"I speak, Mr. Hervey, from the bottom of my soul," cried lord Delacour, pulling in his horse, and stopping short. "I should be an unfeeling, ungrateful brute, if I were not sensible of the obligations—yes, the obligations—which my lady Delacour and I have received from Belinda Portman. Why, sir, she has been the peacemaker between us——But we will not talk of that now. Let us think of her affairs. If Mr. Vincent once get into Mrs. Luttridge's cursed set, there's no knowing where it will end. I speak from my own experience, for I really never was fond of high play; and yet, when I got

into that set, I could not withstand it. I lost by hundreds and thousands; and so will he, before he is aware of it, no doubt. Mrs. Luttridge will look upon him as her dupe, and make him such. I always—but this is between ourselves—suspected, that I did not lose my last thousand to her fairly. Now, Hervey, you know the whole, do try and save Mr. Vincent, for Belinda Portman's sake."

Clarence Hervey shook hands with lord Delacour, with a sentiment of real gratitude and affection; and assured him, that his confidence was not misplaced. His lordship little suspected, that he had been soliciting him to save his rival; yet his confidence, as Mr. Hervey assured him, was not misplaced. Clarence's love was not of that selfish sort, which, the moment that it is deprived of hope, sinks to indifference, or is converted into hatred. Belinda could not be his; but, in the midst of the bitterest regret, he was supported by the consciousness of his own honour and generosity: he felt a noble species of

delight, in the prospect of promoting the happiness of the woman, upon whom his fondest affections had been fixed; and he rejoiced to feel, that he had sufficient magnanimity to save a rival from ruin. He was even determined to make that rival his friend, notwithstanding the prepossession which, he clearly perceived, Mr. Vincent felt against him.

"His jealousy will be extinguished, the moment he knows my real situation," said Clarence to himself. "He will be convinced that I have a soul incapable of envy; and, if he suspect my love for Belinda, he will respect the strength of mind with which I can command my passions. I take it for granted, that Mr. Vincent must possess a heart and understanding, such as I should desire in a friend, or he could never be—what he is to Belinda."

Full of these generous sentiments, Clarence waited, with impatience, for the hour when he might present himself at Mrs. Luttridge's. He went there so early in the evening, that he found the drawing

room quite empty; the company, who had been invited to dine, had not yet left the parlour, and the servants had but just set the card tables, and lighted the candles. Mr. Hervey desired, that nobody should be disturbed by his coming so early; and, fortunately, Mrs. Luttridge was detained some minutes by lady Newland's lingering glass of Madeira. In the mean time, Clarence executed his design. From his former observations, and from the hints that lord Delacour had let fall, he suspected that there was sometimes in this house not only high play, but foul play: he recollected, that once, when he played there at billiards, he had perceived that the table was not perfectly horizontal; and it occurred to him that, perhaps, he E O table might be so contrived, as to put the fortunes of all who played at it in the power of the proprietor. Clarence had sufficient ingenuity to invent the method by which this might be done; and he had the infallible means in his possession of detecting the fraud. The E O table

was in an apartment adjoining to the drawing-room: he found his way to it; he and discovered, beyond a possibility of doubt, that it was constructed for the purposes of fraud. His first impulse was, to tell this immediately to Mr. Vincent, to put him on his guard; but, upon reflection, he determined to keep his discovery to himself, till he was satisfied whether that gentleman had, or had not, any passion for play.

"If he have," thought Clarence, "it is of the utmost consequence to miss Portman, that he should early in life receive a shock, that may leave an indelible impression upon his mind. To save him a few hours of remorse, I will not give up the power of doing him the most essential service. I will let him go on—If he be so inclined—to the very verge of ruin and despair: I will let him feel all the horrours of a gamester's fate, before I tell him, that I have the means to save him. Mrs. Luttridge must, when I call upon her, refund whatever he may lose: she will not brave

public shame—she cannot stand a public prosecution."

Scarcely had Clarence arranged his scheme, when he heard the voices of the ladies, who were coming from the parlour.

Mrs. Luttridge made her appearance, accompanied by a very pretty, modish, affected young lady, miss Annabella Luttridge, her niece. Her little coquettish airs were lost upon Clarence Hervey, whose eye was intently fixed upon the door, watching for the entrance of Mr. Vincent. He was one of the dinner party, and he came up stairs soon after the ladies. He seemed prepared for the sight of Mr. Hervey, to whom he bowed with a cold, haughty air; and then addressed himself to miss Annabella Luttridge, who showed the most obvious desire to attract his attention.

From all that passed this evening, Mr. Hervey was led to suspect, notwithstanding the reasons which made it apparently improbable, that the fair Annabella was

the secret cause of Mr. Vincent's frequent visits at her aunt's. It was natural that Clarence should be disposed to this opinion, from the circumstances of his own situation. During three hours, that he staid at Mrs. Luttridge's, Mr. Vincent never joined any of the parties at play; but, just as he was going away, he heard some one say—"How comes it, Vincent, that you've been idle all night?" This question revived Mr. Hervey's suspicions; and, uncertain what report he should make to lord Delacour, he resolved to defer making any, till he had farther opportunities of judging.

When Mr. Hervey asked himself, how it was possible that the pupil of Mr. Percival could become a gamester, he forgot that Mr. Vincent had not been educated by his guardian: that he had lived in the West Indies, till he was eighteen; and that he had only been under the care of Mr. Percival for a few years, after his habits and character were in a great measure formed. The taste for gambling he had

acquired whilst he was a child; but as it was then confined to trifles, it had been passed over, as a thing of no consequence, a boyish folly, that would never grow up with him: his father used to see him, day after day, playing with eagerness at games of chance, with his negroes, or with the sons of neighbouring planters; yet he was never alarmed; he was too intent upon making a fortune for his family, to consider how they would spend it; and he did not foresee, that this boyish fault might be the means of his son's losing, in a few hours, the wealth which he had been many years amassing. When young Vincent came over to England, Mr. Percival had not immediate opportunities of discovering this particular foible in his ward; put he perceived, that in his mind there was that presumptuous belief in his special good fortune, which naturally leads to the love of gambling. Instead of lecturing him, his guardian appealed to his understanding, and took opportunities of showing him the ruinous effects of high

play in real life. Young Vincent was touched, and, as he thought, convinced; but his emotion was stronger than his conviction; his feelings were always more powerful than his reason. His detestation of the selfish character of a gamester was felt and expressed with enthusiasm and eloquence; and his indignation rose afterward, at the slightest hint that *he* might ever in future be tempted, to become what he abhorred. Unfortunately he disdained prudence, as the factitious virtue of inferior minds: he thought that the *feelings* of a man of honour were to be his guide, in the first and last appeal; and for his conduct through life, as a man and as a gentleman, he proudly professed to trust to the sublime instinct of a good heart. His guardian's doubts of the infallibility, and even of the existence, of this moral instinct, wounded Mr. Vincent's pride, instead of alarming his understanding; and he was rather eager, than averse, to expose himself to the danger, that he might prove his superiority to the temptation. How

different are the feelings in different situations! Yet, often as this has been repeated, how difficult it is to impress the truth upon inexperienced, sanguine minds!—Whilst young Vincent was immediately under his guardian's eye at Oakly-park, his safety from vice appeared to him inglorious; he was impatient to sally forth into the world, confident rather of his innate than acquired virtue.

When he first became acquainted with Mrs. Luttridge at Harrowgate, he knew that she was a professed gambler, and he despised the character; yet without reflecting on the danger, or perhaps for the pleasure of convincing Mr. Percival that he was superior to it, he continued his visits. For some time he was a passive spectator. Billiards, however, was a game of address, not chance; there was a billiard table at Oakly-park, as well as at Mr. Luttridge's, and he had played with his guardian. Why then should he not play with Mr. Luttridge? He did play: his skill was admired;

he betted, and his bets were successful: but he did not call this gaming, for the bets were not to any great amount, and it was only playing at billiards. Mr. Percival was delayed in town some weeks longer than usual, and he knew nothing of the manner in which his young friend spent his time. As soon as Mr. Vincent heard of his arrival at Oakly-park, he left half finished his game at billiards; and, fortunately for him, the charms of Belinda made him forget for some months, that such a thing as a billiard-table existed. All that had happened at Mr. Luttridge's passed from his mind as a dream; and whilst his heart was agitated by his new passion, he could scarcely believe, that he had ever been interested by any other feelings. He was surprised, when he accidentally recollected the eagerness, with which he used to *amuse* himself in Mr. Luttridge's company; but he was certain, that all this was past for ever; and precisely because he was under the dominion of one strong passion, he thought he

could never be under the dominion of another. Thus persisting in his disdain of reason as a moral guide, Mr. Vincent thought, acted, and suffered as a man of feeling. Scarcely had Belinda left Oakly-park for one week, when the ennui consequent to violent passion became insupportable; and to console himself for her absence, he flew to the billiard table. Emotion of some kind or other was become necessary to him; he said that not to feel, was not to live; and soon the suspense, the anxiety, the hopes, the fears, the perpetual vicissitudes of a gamester's life, appeared to him almost as delightful as those of a lover's. Deceived by these appearances, Mrs. Luttridge thought that his affection for Belinda either was, or might be conquered, and her hopes of obtaining his fortune for her niece Annabella revived. As Mr. Vincent could not endure Mrs. Freke, she abstained, at her friend's particular desire, from appearing at her house whilst he was there, and Mrs. Luttridge interested him

much in her own favour, by representing her indignation at *Harriott's* conduct to be such, that it had occasioned a total breach in their friendship. Mrs. Freke's sudden departure from Harrowgate confirmed the probability of this quarrel ; yet these two ladies were secretly leagued together in a design of breaking off Mr. Vincent's match with Belinda, against whom Mrs. Freke had vowed revenge. The anonymous letter, which she hoped would work her purpose, produced however an effect totally unexpected upon his generous mind—he did not guess the writer ; but his indignation against such base accusations burst forth with a violence that astounded Mrs. Luttridge : his love for Belinda appeared ten times more enthusiastic than before—the moment she was accused, he felt himself her defender, as well as her lover. He was dispossessed of the evil spirit of gambling as if by a miracle ; and the billiard-table, and Mrs. Luttridge, and miss Annabella vanished from his view.

He breathed nothing but love; he would ask no permission; he would wait for none from Belinda; he declared that instant he would set out in search of her, and he would tear that infamous letter to atoms in her presence; he would show her how impossible suspicion was to his nature. The first violence of the hurricane Mrs. Luttridge could not stand, and thought not of opposing; but whilst his horses and curricle were getting ready, she took such an affectionate leave of his dog Juba, and she protested so much, that she and Annabella should not know how to live without poor Juba, that Mr. Vincent, who was excessively fond of his dog, could not help sympathizing in their sorrow: reasoning just as well as they wished, he extended his belief in their affection for this animal to friendship, if not love, for his master. He could not grant Mrs. Luttridge's earnest supplication to leave the dog behind him, under her protection; but he promised —and laid his hand upon his heart, when he promised—that Juba should wait upon

Mrs. Luttridge as soon as she went to town. This appointment being made, miss Annabella permitted herself to be somewhat consoled. It would be injustice to omit, that she did all that could be done by a cambric handkerchief, to evince delicate sensibility in this parting scene. Mrs. Luttridge also deserves her share of praise, for the manner in which she reproved her niece "for giving way to her feelings, and for the address, with which she wished to Heaven, that poor Annabella had the calm philosophic temper, of which miss Portman was, she understood, a most uncommon example."

As Mr. Vincent drove toward London he reflected upon these last words; and he could not help thinking, that if Belinda had more faults she would be more amiable.

These thoughts were however driven from his mind, and scarcely left a trace behind them, when he once more saw and conversed with her. The dignity, sincerity, and kindness, which she showed the

evening that he put the anonymous letter into her hands, charmed and touched him, and his real feelings and his enthusiasm conspired to make him believe, that his whole happiness depended on her smiles. The confession, which she made to him of her former attachment to Clarence Hervey, as it raised in Vincent's mind strong emotions of jealousy, increased his passion as much as it piqued his pride, and she appeared in a new and highly interesting light, when he discovered that the coldness of manner, which he had attributed to want of sensibility, arose probably from its excess—that her heart should have been preoccupied, was more tolerable to him, than the belief of her settled indifference. He was so intent upon these delightful varieties in his love for Belinda, that it was not, till he had received a reproachful note from Mrs. Luttridge, to remind him of his promised visit from Juba, that he could prevail upon himself to leave Twickenham, even for a few hours. Lady Delacour's hatred or fear of Juba, which he acciden-

tally mentioned to miss Annabella, appeared to her and to her aunt "the most extraordinary thing upon Earth;" and when it was contrasted with their excessive fondness, it seemed to him indeed unaccountable. From pure consideration for her ladyship's nerves, Mrs. Luttridge petitioned Vincent to leave the dog with her, that Helena might not be in such imminent danger from "the animal's monstrous jaws."—The petition was granted; and as the petitioners foresaw, Juba became to them a most useful auxiliary. Juba's master called daily to see him, and some times when he came in the morning Mrs. Luttridge was not at home, so that his visits were repeated in the evening, and the evening in London is what, in other places, is called the night.—Mrs. Luttridge's nights could not be passed without deep play. The sight of the E O table at first shocked Mr. Vincent: he thought of Mr. Percival, and he turned away from it; but to his active social disposition it was extremely irksome, to stand idle and unin-

terested, where all were busy and eager in one common pursuit; to his generous temper it seemed ungentlemanlike to stand by the silent censor of the rest of the company; and when he considered of how little importance a few hundreds, or even thousands, could be to a man of his large fortune, he *could not help feeling*, that it was sordid, selfish, avaricious, to dread their possible loss; and thus social spirit, courage, generosity, all conspired to carry our man of feeling to the gaming-table. Once there his ruin was inevitable. Mrs. Luttridge, whilst she held his doom in her power, hesitated only whether it would be more her interest to marry him to her niece, or to content herself with his fortune. His passion for Belinda, which she saw had been by some means or other increased, in spite of the anonymous letter, gave her little hopes of Annabella's succeeding, even with the assistance of Juba and delicate sensibility. So the aunt, careless of her niece's disappointment, determined that Mr. Vincent should be *her* victim; and sensible that she must

not give him time for reflection, she hurried him on, till in the course of a few evenings spent at the E O table, he lost, not only thousands, but tens of thousands. —One lucky night, she assured him, would set all to rights; the run could not always be against him, and Fortune must change in his favour, if he tried her with sufficient perseverance.

The horrour, the agony of mind, which he endured at this sudden ruin, which seemed impending over him, the recollection of Belinda, of Mr. Percival, almost drove him to distraction—He retreated from the E O table one night, swearing that he never would hazard another guinea. But his ruin was not yet complete—he had thousands yet to lose, and Mrs. Luttridge would not thus relinquish her prey. She persuaded him to try his fortune *once* more. She now suffered him to regain courage, by winning back some of his own fortune. His mind was relieved from the sense of immediate danger; he rejoiced to be saved from the humiliation of confessing his losses

to Mr. Percival and Belinda. The next day he saw her with unusual pleasure, and this was the very morning when Clarence Hervey paid his visit. The imprudence of lady Delacour, joined perhaps to his own consciousness, that he had a secret fault, which ought to lower him in the esteem of his mistress, made him misinterpret every thing that passed—his jealousy was excited in the most sudden and violent manner. He flew from lady Delacour's to Mrs. Luttridge's—he was soothed and flattered by the apparent kindness, with which he was received by Annabella and her aunt; but after dinner, when one of the servants whispered to Mrs. Luttridge who sat next to him, that Mr. Clarence Hervey was above stairs, he gave such a start, that part of the bumper of wine which he was going to drink to her health did not escape the fair Annabella's lap. In the confusion and apologies, which this accident occasioned, Mrs. Luttridge had time to consider what might be the cause of the start, and she combined her suspicions

so quickly and judiciously, that she guessed the truth—that he feared to be seen at the E O table by a person, who might find it for his interest to tell the truth to Belinda Portman.—"Mr. Vincent," said she, in a low voice, "I have such a terrible head-ache, that I am fit for nothing—I am not *up to* E O to night, so you must wait for your revenge till to morrow."

Mr. Vincent was heartily glad to be relieved from his engagement, and he endeavoured to escape Clarence's suspicions, by devoting his whole time this evening to Annabella, not in the least apprehensive that Mr. Hervey would return the next night. Mr. Vincent was at the E O table at the usual hour, for he was excessively anxious to regain what he had lost, not so much for the sake of the money, which he could afford to lose, but lest the defalcation in his fortune should lead Mr. Percival to the knowledge of the means which had occasioned it. He could not endure, after his high vaunts, to see himself humbled by his rash confidence in himself, and

he secretly vowed, that if he could but reinstate himself, by one night's good luck, he would for ever quit the society of gamblers. A few months before this time, he would have scorned the idea of concealing any part of his conduct, any one of his actions, from his best friend, Mr. Percival; but his pride now reconciled him to the meanness of concealment; and here, the acuteness of his feelings was to his own mind an excuse for dissimulation: so fallacious is moral instinct, unenlightened or uncontrolled by reason and religion.

Mr. Vincent was disappointed in his hopes of regaining what he had lost. This was not the fortunate night, which Mrs. Luttridge's prognostics had vainly taught him to expect: he played on, however, with all the impetuosity of his natural temper; his judgment forsook him; he scarcely knew what he said or did; and, in the course of a few hours, he was worked up to such a pitch of insanity, that in one desperate moment, he betted nearly all that he was worth in the world—

and lost!—He stood like one stupified—the hum of voices scarcely reached his ear—he saw figures moving before him; but he did not distinguish who, or what, they were.

Supper was announced, and the room emptied fast, whilst he remained motionless, leaning on the E O table. He was roused by Mrs. Luttridge's saying, as she passed—"Don't you sup to night, Mr. Hervey?"—Vincent looked up, and saw Clarence Hervey opposite to him. His countenance instantly changed, and the lightning of anger flashed through the gloom of despair: he uttered not a syllable; but his looks said—"How is this sir? Here again to night, to watch me?—to enjoy my ruin?—to be ready to carry the first news of it to Belinda?"

At this last thought, Vincent struck his closed hand with violence against his forehead; and rushing by Mr. Hervey, who in vain attempted to speak to him, he pressed into the midst of the crowd on the stairs, and let himself be carried along with them

into the supper room. At supper he took his usual seat between Mrs. Luttridge and the fair Annabella; and, as if determined to brave the observing eyes of Clarence Hervey, who was at the same table, he affected extravagant gayety; he ate, drank, talked, and laughed, more than any of the company. Toward the end of the supper, his dog, who was an inmate at Mrs. Luttridge's, licked his hand, to put him in mind, that he had given him nothing to eat.

"Drink, Juba!—drink, and never have done, boy!" cried Vincent, holding a bumper of wine to the dog's mouth: he's the only dog I ever saw taste wine." Then snatching up some of the flowers, which ornamented the table, he swore that Juba should henceforward be called Anacreon, and that he deserved to be crowned with roses by the hand of Beauty. The fair Annabella instantly took a hot-house rose from her bosom, and assisted in making the garland, with which she crowned the new Anacreon. Insensible to his honours,

the dog, who was extremely hungry, turned suddenly to Mrs. Luttridge, by whom he had, till this night, regularly been fed with the choicest morsels; and lifting up his huge paw, laid it, as he had been wont to do, upon her arm. She shook it off: he, knowing nothing of the change in his master's affairs, laid the paw again upon her arm; and with that familiarity, to which he had long been encouraged, raised his head almost close to the lady's cheek.

"Down, Juba!—down, sir, down!" cried Mrs. Luttridge, in a sharp voice.

"Down, Juba!—down, sir!" repeated Mr. Vincent, in a tone of bitter feeling, all his assumed gayety forsaking him at this instant. "Down, Juba!—down, sir—down!—as low as your master!" thought he; and pushing back his chair, he rose from table, and precipitately left the room.

Little notice was taken of his retreat; the chairs closed in; and the gap, which his vacant place left, was visible but for a

moment: the company were as gay as before; the fair Annabella smiled with a grace as attractive; and Mrs. Luttridge exulted in the success of her schemes—whilst her victim was in the agonies of despair.

Clarence Hervey, who had watched every change of Vincent's countenance, saw the agony of soul, with which he rose from the table, and quitted the room: he suspected his purpose, and followed him immediately. But Mr. Vincent had got out of the house before he could overtake him, which way he was gone, no one could tell, for no one had seen him: the only information he could gain was, that he might possibly be heard of at Nerot's Hotel, or at governor Montford's, in Portland place. The hotel was but a few yards from Mrs. Luttridge's. Clarence went there directly. He asked for Mr. Vincent. One of the waiters said, that he was not yet come in; but another called out—"Mr. Vincent, sir, did you say? I have just shown him up to his room."

"Which is his room?—I must see him instantly," cried Hervey.

"Not to night—you can't see him now, sir. Mr. Vincent won't let you in, I can assure you, sir. I went up myself three minutes ago, with some letters, that came whilst he was away, but he would not let me in. I heard him double-lock the door, and he swore terribly. I can't go up again, at this time o'night—for my life I dare not, sir."

"Where is his own man?—Has Mr Vincent any servant here?—Mr. Vincent's man!" cried Clarence; "let me see him!"

"You can't sir. Mr. Vincent has just sent his black, the only servant he has here, out on some message.—Indeed, sir, there's no use in going up," continued the waiter, as Clarence sprang up two or three stairs at once: "Mr. Vincent has desired nobody may disturb him. I give you my word, sir, he'll be very angry; and, besides, 'twould be to no purpose, for he'll not unlock the door."

"Is there but one door to the room?" said Mr. Hervey; and, as he asked the question, he pulled a guinea out of his pocket, and touched the waiter's hand with it.

"O—now I recollect—yes, sir, there's a private door through a closet—may be that may'nt be fastened."

Clarence put the guinea into the waiter's hand, who instantly showed him the way up the back stair-case to the door, that opened into Mr. Vincent's bed-chamber.

"Leave me now," whispered he, "and make no noise."

The man withdrew; and as Mr. Hervey went close to the concealed door, to try if it was fastened, he distinctly heard a pistol cocked. The door was not fastened: he pushed it softly open, and saw this unfortunate man upon his knees, the pistol in his hand, his eyes looking up to Heaven. Clarence was in one moment behind him; and, seizing hold of the pistol, he snatched it from Vincent's grasp with so much calm presence of mind and

dexterity, that, although the pistol was cocked, it did not go off.

"Mr. Hervey!" exclaimed Vincent, starting up. Astonishment overpowered all other sensations. But the next instant recovering the power of speech,—"Is this the conduct of a gentleman, Mr. Hervey? —of a man of honour!" cried he, "thus to intrude upon my privacy! to be a spy upon my actions; to triumph in my ruin; to witness my despair; to rob me of the only—"

He looked wildly at the pistol, which Clarence held in his hand; then snatching up another, which lay upon the table, he continued—"You are my enemy—I know it—you are my rival—I know it—Belinda loves you—Nay, affect not to start—this is no time for dissimulation—Belinda loves you—you know it—for her sake, for your own, put me out of the world—put me out of torture. It shall not be called murder; it shall be called a duel. You have been a spy upon my actions—I demand satisfaction. If you have one spark of ho-

nour or of courage within you, Mr. Hervey, show it now—fight me, sir, openly as man to man, rival to rival, enemy to enemy—fire."

"If you fire upon me, you will repent it," replied Clarence, calmly, "for I am not your enemy; I am not your rival."

"You *are*," interrupted Vincent, raising his voice to the highest pitch of indignation: "you are my rival, though you dare not avow it; the denial is base, false, unmanly.—O, Belinda, is this the being you prefer to *me?* Gamester!—wretch as I am, my soul never stooped to falsehood; treachery I abhor; courage, honour, and a heart worthy of Belinda, I possess. I beseech you, sir," continued he, addressing himself, in a tremulous tone of contempt to Mr. Hervey—"I beseech you, sir, to leave me to my own feelings—and to myself."

"You are not yourself at this moment, and I cannot leave you to such mistaken feelings," replied Hervey; "command

yourself for a moment, and hear me; use your reason, and you will soon be convinced, that I am your friend."

"My friend!"

"Your friend—For what purpose did I come here, to snatch this pistol from your hand? If it were my interest, my wish, that you were out of the world, why did I prevent you from destroying yourself? Do you think *that* the action of an enemy? Use your reason."

"I cannot," said Vincent, striking his forehead; "I know not what to think;—I am not master of myself—I conjure you, sir, for your own sake, to leave me."

"For my *own* sake!" repeated Hervey, disdainfully; "I am not thinking of myself; nor can any thing you have said provoke me from my purpose. My purpose is to save you from ruin, for the sake of a woman, whom, though I am no longer your rival, I have loved longer, if not better, than you have."

There was something so open in Hervey's countenance; such a strong expres-

sion of truth in his manner, that it could not be resisted, and Vincent, in an altered voice, exclaimed:

"You acknowledge that you have loved Belinda—and could you cease to love her? Impossible!—And, loving her, must you not detest me?"

"No," said Clarence, holding out his hand to him; "I wish to be your friend; I have not the baseness to wish to deprive others of happiness, because I cannot enjoy it myself. In one word, to put you at ease with me for ever, I have no pretensions, I can have none, to miss Portman. I am engaged to another woman—in a few days you will hear of my marriage."

Mr. Vincent threw the pistol from him, and gave his hand to Hervey.

"Pardon what I said to you just now," cried he; "I knew not what I said—I spoke in the agony of despair—your purpose is most generous—but it is in vain—you come too late—I am ruined, past all hope."

He folded his arms, and his eyes reverted involuntarily to his pistols.

"The misery that you have this night experienced," said Mr. Hervey, "was necessary to the security of your future happiness."

"Happiness;" repeated Vincent—"happiness—there is no happiness left for me. My doom is fixed—fixed by my own folly—my own rash headstrong folly. Madman that I was, what could tempt me to the gaming table? O! if I could recal but a few days, a few hours of my existence!—but remorse is vain; prudence comes too late. Do you know," said he, fixing his eyes upon Hervey, "do you know that I am a beggar? that I have not a farthing left upon Earth. Go to Belinda; tell her so: tell her, that if she had ever the slightest regard for me, I deserve it no longer. Tell her to forget, despise, detest me. Give her joy that she has escaped having a gamester for a husband."

"I will," said Clarence, "I will, if you please, tell her what I believe to be true, that the agony you have felt this night, the dear-bought experience you have had, will be for ever a warning."

"A warning!" interrupted Vincent—"O, that it could yet be useful to me!—But I tell you, it comes too late—Nothing can save me."

"*I* can," said Mr. Hervey. "Swear to me, for Belinda's sake—solemnly swear to me, that you will never more trust your happiness and hers to the hazard of a die—swear that you will never more, directly or indirectly, play at any game of chance, and I will restore to you the fortune, the happiness that you have lost."

Mr. Vincent stood, as if suspended between ecstacy and despair; he dared not trust his senses: with a fervent and solemn adjuration he made the vow that was required of him; and Clarence then revealed to him the secret of the E O table.

"When Mrs. Luttridge knows that I have it in my power to expose her to public shame, she will instantly refund all that she has iniquitously won from you. Even among gamblers she would be blasted for ever by this discovery: she knows it, and if she dared to brave public opinion, we have then a sure resource in the law—prosecute her. The laws of honour, as well as the laws of the land will support the prosecution. But she will never let the affair go into a court justice. I will see her early, as early as I can to morrow, and put you out of suspense."

"Most generous of human beings!" exclaimed Vincent; "I cannot express to you what I feel; but your own heart, your own approbation—"

"Farewel, good night," interrupted Clarence; "I see that I have made a friend —I was determined that Belinda's husband should be my friend—I have succeeded beyond my hopes. And now I will *intrude* no longer," said he, as he closed the door

after him. His sensations, at this instant, were more delightful, even than those of the man he had relieved from the depth of despair. How wisely has Providence made the benevolent and generous passions the most pleasurable!

CHAPTER XXIX.

A JEW.

IN the silence of the night, when the hurry of action was over, and the enthusiasm of generosity began to subside, the words, which had escaped from Mr. Vincent in the paroxysm of despair and rage—the words—"*Belinda loves you*"—recurred to Clarence Hervey; and it required all his power over himself, to banish the sound from his ear, and the idea from his mind. He endeavoured to persuade himself, that these words were dictated merely by sudden jealousy; and that there could be no real foundation for the assertion: perhaps this belief was a necessary support to his integrity. He reflected, that, at all events, his engagement with Virginia could not be violated; his proffered ser-

vices to Mr. Vincent could not be withdrawn: he was firm and consistent. Before two o'clock the next day, Vincent received from Clarence this short note:

"Enclosed is Mrs. Luttridge's acknowledgment, that she has no claims upon you, in consequence of what passed last night. I said nothing about the money she had previously won, as I understand you have paid it.

"The lady fell into fits; but it would not do. The husband attempted to bully me. I told him I should be at his service, after he had made the whole affair public, by calling you out.

"I would have seen you myself this morning, but that I am engaged with lawyers and marriage settlements.

"Yours sincerely,

"CLARENCE HERVEY."

Overjoyed at the sight of Mrs. Luttridge's acknowledgment, Vincent repeated his vow, never more to hazard

himself in her dangerous society. He was impatient to see Belinda; and full of generous and grateful sentiments, in his first moment of joy, he determined to conceal nothing from her; to make at once the confession of his own imprudence and the eulogium of Clarence Hervey's generosity. He was just setting out for Twickenham, when he was sent for by his uncle, governor Montford, who had business to settle with him, relative to the West India estates. He spent the remainder of the morning with his uncle; and there he received a charming letter from Belinda;—that letter, which she had written and sent, whilst lady Delacour was reading Clarence Hervey's packet. It would have cured Vincent of jealousy, even if he had not, in the interim, seen Mr. Hervey, and learnt from him the news of his approaching marriage. Miss Portman, at the conclusion of her letter, informed him, that lady Delacour purposed being in Berkeley square the next day; that they were to spend a week

in town, on account of Mrs. Margaret Delacour, who had promised her ladyship a visit; and to go to Twickenham would be a formidable journey to an infirm old lady, who seldom stirred out of her house.

Whatever displeasure lady Delacour felt towards her friend Belinda, on account of her coldness to Mr. Hervey, and her steadiness to Mr. Vincent, had by this time subsided. Angry people, who express their passion, as it has been justly said, always speak worse than they think. This was usually the case with her ladyship.

The morning after they arrived in town, she came into Belinda's room, with an air of more than usual sprightliness and satisfaction.—"Great news!—Great news!—Extraordinary news:—But it is very imprudent to excite your expectations, my dear Belinda. Pray, did you hear a wonderful noise in the square a little while ago?"

"Yes, I thought I heard a great bustle; but Marriott appeased my curiosity, by saying, that it was only a battle between two dogs."

"It is well, if this battle between two dogs do not end in a duel between two men," said lady Delacour.

"This prospect of mischief seems to have put your ladyship in wonderfully good spirits," said Belinda, smiling. "But what have you heard of Mr. Vincent?"

"That miss Annabella Luttridge is dying for love of him—or of his fortune. Knowing, as I do, the vanity of mankind, I suppose, that your Mr. Vincent, all perfect as he is, was flattered by the little coquet; and perhaps he condescends to repay her in the same coin. I take it for granted—for I always fill up the gaps in a story my own way—I take it for granted, that Mr. Vincent got into some entanglement with her; and that this has been the cause of the quarrel with the aunt. That there has been a quarrel, is certain:

for your friend Juba told Marriott so. His massa swore, that he would never go to Mrs. Luttridge's again; and this morning he took the decisive measure of sending to request, that his dog might be returned. Juba went for his namesake. Miss Annabella Luttridge was the person, who delivered up the dog; and she desired the black to tell his master, with her compliments, that Juba's collar was rather too tight; and she begged that he would not fail to take it off as soon as he could. Perhaps, my dear, you are as simple as the poor negro, and suspect no *finesse* in this message. Miss Luttridge, aware that the faithful fellow was too much in your interests, to be either persuaded or bribed to carry a billet doux from any other lady to his master, did not dare to trust him upon this occasion; but she had the art to make him carry her letter, without his knowing it. *Colin maillard*, vulgarly called *blind man's buff*, was, some time ago, a favourite play amongst the Parisian ladies: now, *hide and seek* will be

brought into fashion, I suppose, by the fair Annabella. Judge of her talents for the game by this instance:—She hid her billet-doux within the lining of Juba's collar. The dog, unconscious of his dignity as an ambassador, or rather as a chargé d'affaires, set out on his way home. As he was crossing Berkeley square, he was met by sir Philip Baddely and his dog. The baronet's insolent favourite bit the black's heels. Juba, the dog, resented the injury immediately, and a furious combat ensued. In the height of the battle Juba's collar fell off. Sir Philip Baddely espied the paper, that was sewed to the lining, and seized upon it immediately: the negro caught hold of it at the same instant: the baronet swore; the black struggled: the baronet knocked him down. The great dog left his canine antagonist that moment, flew at your baronet, and would have eaten him up at three mouthfuls, if sir Philip had not made good his retreat to Dangerfield's circulating library. The negro's head was terribly cut by the sharp point of a stone, and his ancle was

sprained; but, as he has just told me, he did not feel this till afterward. He started up, and pursued his master's enemy. Sir Philip was actually reading miss Luttridge's billet-doux aloud, when the black entered the library. He reclaimed his master's property, with great intrepidity; and a gentleman, who was present, took his part immediately.

"In the mean time, lord Delacour, who had been looking at the battle from our breakfast-room window, determined to go over to Dangerfield's, to see what was the matter, and how all this would end. He entered the library, just as the gentleman, who had volunteered in favour of poor Juba, was disputing with sir Philip. The bleeding negro told my lord, in as plain words as he could, the cause of the dispute; and lord Delacour, who, to do him justice, is a man of honour, joined instantly in his defence. The baronet thought proper at length, to submit; and he left the field of battle, without having any thing to say for himself, but—'Damme!—

very extraordinary, damme!'—*or words to that effect.*

"Now, lord Delacour, beside being a man of honour, is also a man of humanity. I know that I cannot oblige you more, my dear Belinda, than by seasoning my discourse with a little conjugal flattery. My lord was concerned to see the poor black writhing in pain; and with the assistance of the gentleman, who had joined in his defence, he brought Juba across the square to our house. Guess for what:—to try upon the strained ancle an infallible quack balsam recommended to him by the dowager lady Boucher. I was in the hall, when they brought the poor fellow in, Marriott was called. 'Mrs. Marriott,' cried my lord, 'pray let us have lady Boucher's infallible balsam—this instant!' Had you but seen the eagerness of face, or heard the emphasis, with which he said, '*infallible* balsam'—you must let me laugh at the recollection. One human smile must pass, and be forgiven."

"The smile may be the more readily forgiven," said Belinda, "since, I am sure, you are conscious, that it reflected almost as much upon yourself as upon lord Delacour."

"Why, yes; belief in a quack doctor is full as bad as belief in a quack balsam, I allow. Your observation is so malicious, because so just, that to punish you for it, I will not tell you the remainder of my story for a week to come; and I assure you, that the best part of it I have left untold. To return to our friend, Mr. Vincent:—Could you but know, what reasons I have, at this instant, for wishing him in Jamaica, you would acknowledge, that I am truly candid in confessing, that I believe my suspicions about E O were unfounded; and I am truly generous in admitting, that you are right to treat him with justice."

This last enigmatical sentence Belinda could not prevail upon lady Delacour to explain.

In the evening Mr. Vincent made his appearance. Lady Delacour immediately attacked him with raillery, on the subject of the fair Annabella. He was rejoiced to perceive, that her suspicions took this turn; and that nothing relative to the transaction, in which Clarence Hervey had been engaged, had transpired. Vincent wavered in his resolution to confess the truth to Belinda. Though he had determined upon this in the first moment of joyful enthusiasm, yet the delay of four and twenty hours had made a material change in his feelings; his most virtuous resolves were always rather the effect of sudden impulse, than of steady principle. But when the tide of passion had swept away the landmarks, he had no method of ascertaining the boundaries of right and wrong. Upon the present occasion, his love for Belinda confounded all his moral calculations: one moment, his feelings as a man of honour forbade him to condescend to the meanness of dissimulation; but the next in-

stant, his feelings as a lover prevailed; and he satisfied his conscience by the idea, that, as his vow must preclude all danger of his return to the gaming-table in future, it would only be creating an unnecessary alarm in Belinda's mind, to speak to her of his past imprudence. His generosity at first revolted from the thought of suppressing those praises of Clarence Hervey, which had been so well deserved; but his jealousy returned, to combat his first virtuous impulse. He considered that his own inferiority must by comparison appear more striking to his mistress; and he sophistically persuaded himself, that it would be for her happiness to conceal the merits of a rival, to whom she could never be united. In this vacillating state of mind he continued during the greatest part of the evening. About half an hour before he took his leave, lady Delacour was called out of the room by Mrs. Marriott. Left alone with Belinda, his embarrassment increased, and the unsuspecting kindness of her manner was to him

the most bitter reproach. He stood in a silent agony, whilst in a playful tone she smiled and said,

"Where are your thoughts, Mr. Vincent? If I were of a jealous temper, I should say with the fair Annabella——"

"You would say wrong then," replied Mr. Vincent, in a constrained voice. He was upon the point of telling the truth; but to gain a reprieve of a few minutes, he entered into a defence of his conduct towards miss Luttridge.

The sudden return of lady Delacour relieved him from his embarrassment, and they conversed only on general subjects during the remainder of the evening: and he at last departed, secretly rejoicing that he was, as he fancied, under the necessity of postponing his explanation; he even thought of suppressing the history of his transaction with Mrs. Luttridge. His former nice sense of honour had been considerably deadened at the gaming table; and he could *now* stoop to that dissimulation, at which he would have shuddered but

a few months before. He knew that his secret was safe with Clarence Hervey: Mrs. Luttridge would be silent, for her own sake; and neither lady Delacour nor Belinda had any connexion with her society.

A few days afterward, Mr. Vincent went to Gray, the jeweller, for some trinkets, which he had bespoke. Lord Delacour was there, speaking about the diamond ring, which Gray had promised to dispose of for him. Whilst his lordship and Mr. Vincent were busy about their own affairs, sir Philip Baddely and Mr. Rochfort came into the shop. Sir Philip and Mr. Vincent had never before met. Lord Delacour, to prevent him from getting into a quarrel about a lady, who was so little worth fighting for as miss Annabella Luttridge, had positively refused to tell Mr. Vincent what he knew of the affair, or to let him know the name of the gentleman who was concerned in it.

The shopman addressed Mr. Vincent by his name, and immediately sir Philip

whispered to Rochfort, that Mr. Vincent was "*the master of the black*." Vincent, who unluckily overheard him, instantly asked lord Delacour, if that was the gentleman who had behaved so ill to his servant? Lord Delacour told him, that it was now of no consequence to inquire, and that he hoped he was too prudent, on the very eve of his marriage, to go in quest of a quarrel. "If," said his lordship, "any of these gentlemen choose to accost you, I shall think you do rightly to retort; but for Heaven's sake do not begin the attack!"

Vincent's impetuosity was not to be restrained; he demanded from sir Philip, whether he was the person who had beaten his servant? Sir Philip readily obliged him with an answer in the affirmative; and the consequence was, the loss of a finger to the baronet, and a wound in the side to Mr. Vincent, which, though it did not endanger his life, yet confined him to his room for several days. The impatience of his mind increased his fever, and retarded his recovery.

When Belinda's first alarm for Mr. Vincent's safety was over, she anxiously questioned lord Delacour as to the particulars of all that had passed between Mr. Vincent and sir Philip, that she might judge of the manner, in which her lover had conducted himself. Lord Delacour, who was a man of strict truth, was compelled to confess, that Mr. Vincent had shown more spirit than temper, and more courage than prudence. Lady Delacour rejoiced to perceive, that this account made Belinda uncommonly serious.

Mr. Vincent now thought himself sufficiently recovered, to leave his room: his physicians, indeed, would have kept him prisoner a few days longer, but he was too impatient of restraint, to listen to their counsels.

"Juba, tell the doctor, when he comes, that you could not keep me at home; and that is all that is necessary to be said."

He had now summoned courage, to acknowledge to Belinda all that had happened, and was proceeding, with diffi-

culty, down stairs, when he was suddenly struck by the sound of a voice, which he little expected at this moment; a voice he had formerly been accustomed to hear with pleasure, but now it smote him to the heart:—it was the voice of Mr. Percival. For the first time in his life, he wished to deny himself to his friend. The recollection of the E O table, of Mrs. Luttridge, of Mr. Percival as his guardian, and of all the advice he had heard from him as his friend, rushed upon his mind at this instant; conscious and ashamed, he shrunk back, precipitately returned to his own room, and threw himself into a chair, breathless with agitation. He listened, expecting to hear Mr. Percival coming up stairs, and endeavoured to compose himself, that he might not betray, by his own agitation, all that he wished most anxiously to conceal. After waiting for some time, he rang the bell, to make inquiries. The waiter told him, that a Mr. Percival had asked for him; but, having been told by his black that he was just gone out, the gentleman being, as he said, much

hurried, had left a note; for an answer to which he would call at 8 o'clock in the evening. Vincent was glad of this short reprieve. "Alas!" thought he, "how changed am I, when I fear to meet my best friend! To what has this one fatal propensity reduced me!"

He was little aware of the new difficulties that awaited him.

Mr. Percival's note was as follows:

"My dear *friend!*

"Am not I a happy man, to find a friend in my ci-devant ward? But I have no time for sentiment; nor does it become the character, in which I am now writing to you—that of a DUN.—You are so rich, and so prudent, that the word in capital letters cannot frighten you. Lady Anne's cousin, poor Mr. Carysfort, is dead. I am guardian to his boys; they are but ill provided for. I have fortunately obtained a partnership in a good house for the second son. Ten thousand pounds are wanting to establish him—we cannot raise

the money amongst us, without dunning poor Mr. Vincent. Enclosed is your bond for the purchase-money of the little estate you bought from me last summer. I know, that you have double the sum we want in ready money—so I make no ceremony. Let me have the ten thousand this evening, if you can, as I wish to leave town as soon as possible.

"Yours, most sincerely,

"HENRY PERCIVAL."

Now, Mr. Vincent had lost, and had actually paid to Mrs. Luttridge, the ready money, which had been destined to discharge his debt to Mr. Percival: he expected fresh remittances from the West-Indies in the course of a few weeks; but, in the mean time, he must raise this money immediately: this he could only do by having recourse to Jews—a desperate expedient. The Jew, to whom he applied, no sooner discovered, that Mr. Vincent was under a necessity of having this sum before eight o'clock in the evening, than

he became exorbitant in his demands; and the more impatient this unfortunate young man became, the more difficulties he raised. At last, a bargain was concluded between them, in which Vincent knew, that he was grossly imposed upon; but to this he submitted, for he had no alternative. The Jew promised to bring him ten thousand pounds at five o'clock in the evening, but it was half after seven before he made his appearance; and then, he was so dilatory and circumspect, in reading over and signing the bonds, and in completing the formalities of the transaction, that before the money was actually in Vincent's possession, one of the waiters of the hotel knocked at the door, to let him know that Mr. Percival was coming up stairs. Vincent hurried the Jew into an adjoining apartment, and bid him wait there, till he should come to finish the business. Though totally unsuspicious, Mr. Percival could not help being struck with the perturbation, in which he found his young friend. Vincent immediately began to

talk of the duel, which had delayed his marriage, and his friend was led to conclude, that his anxiety arose from this af. fair. He endeavoured to put him at ease by changing the conversation. He spoke of the business, which brought him to town, and of the young man, whom he was going to place with a banker.

"I hope," said he, observing that Vincent grew more embarrassed, "that my *dunning* you for this money is not really inconvenient."

"Not in the least—not in the least. I have the money ready—in a few moments—if you'll be so good as to wait here—I have the money ready in the next room."

At this instant a loud noise was heard—the raised voices of two people quarrelling. It was Juba, the black, and Solomon, the Jew. Mr. Vincent had sent Juba out of the way, on some errand, whilst he had been transacting his affairs with the Jew; but the black, having executed the commission on which he had been sent, returned, and went into his master's bed-chamber, to read at his leisure a letter,

which he had just received from his wife. He did not at first see the Jew, and he was spelling out the words of his wife's letter

"My dear Juba,

"I take this op-por-tu—"

—*nity* he would have said; but the Jew, who had held his breath in to avoid discovery, till he could hold it no longer, now drew it so loud, that Juba started, looked round, and saw the feet of a man, which appeared beneath the bottom of the window curtain. Where fears of supernatural appearances were out of the question, our negro was a man of courage; he had no doubt, that the man who was concealed behind the curtain was a robber, but the idea of a robber did not unnerve him like that of an Obeah woman. With presence of mind worthy of a greater danger, Juba took down his master's pistols, which hung over the chimney-piece, and marching deliberately up to the enemy, he seized the Jew by the throat, exclaiming—

"You rob my massa?—You dead man, if you rob my massa."

Terrified at the sight of the pistol, the Jew instantly explained who he was, and producing his large purse, assured Juba, that he was come to lend money, and not to take it from his master; but this appeared highly improbable to Juba, who believed his master to be the richest man in the world; besides, the Jew's language was scarcely intelligible to him, and he saw secret terrour in Solomon's countenance. Solomon had an antipathy to the sight of a black, and he shrunk from the negro with strong signs of aversion. Juba would not relinquish his hold; each went on talking in his own angry gibberish as loud as he could, till at last the negro fairly dragged the Jew into the presence of his master and Mr. Percival.

It is impossible to describe Mr. Vincent's confusion, or Mr. Percival's astonishment. The Jew's explanation was perfectly intelligible to him; he saw at once all the truth. Vincent, overwhelmed with shame, stood the picture of despair, incapable of uttering a single syllable.

"There is no necessity to borrow this money on my account," said Mr. Percival calmly; "and if there were, we could probably have it on more reasonable terms than this gentleman proposes."

"I care not on what terms I have it—I care not what becomes of me—I am undone!" cried Vincent.

Mr. Percival coolly dismissed the Jew, made a sign to Juba to leave the room, and then, addressing himself to Vincent, said—"I can borrow the money that I want elsewhere—Fear no reproaches from me—I foresaw all this—you have lost this sum at play—It is well that it was not your whole fortune. I have only one question to ask you, on which depends my esteem—Have you informed miss Portman of this affair."

"I have not yet told her, but I was actually half down stairs in my way to tell her."

"Then, Mr. Vincent, you are still my friend. I know the difficulty of such an avowal—but it is necessary."

"Cannot you, dear Mr. Percival, save

me the intolerable shame of confessing my own folly?—Spare me this mortification—Be yourself the bearer of this intelligence, and the mediator in my favour."

"I will with pleasure," said Mr. Percival—"I will go this instant—but I cannot say, that I have any hope of persuading Belinda, to believe in your being irrevocably reclaimed from the charms of play."

"Indeed, my excellent friend, she may rely upon me: I feel such horrour at the past, such heartfelt resolution against all future temptation, that you may pledge yourself for my total reformation."

Mr. Percival promised, that he would exert all his influence, except by pledging his own honour; to this he could not consent.—"If I have any good news for you, I will return as soon as possible—but I will not be the bearer of any painful intelligence," said he; and he departed, leaving Mr. Vincent in a state of anxiety, which, to his temper, was a punishment sufficient for almost any imprudence he could have committed.

Mr. Percival returned no more that night. The next morning Mr. Vincent received the following letter from Belinda. —He guessed his fate—he had scarcely power to read the words.

"I promised you, that, whenever my own mind should be decided, I would not hold yours in suspense—yet at this moment I find it difficult, to keep my word.

"Instead of lamenting, as you have often done, that my esteem for your many excellent qualities never rose beyond the bounds of friendship, we have now reason to rejoice at this, since it will save us much useless pain. It spares me the difficulty of conquering a passion, that might be fatal to my happiness; and it will diminish the regret, which you may feel at our separation. I am now obliged to say, that circumstances have made me certain, we could not add to our mutual felicity by any nearer connexion.

"The hopes of enjoying domestic hap-

piness with a person, whose manners, temper, and tastes suited my own, inclined me to listen to your addresses. But this happiness I could never enjoy with one, who has any propensity to the love of play.

"For my own sake, as well as for yours, I rejoice that your fortune has not been materially injured; as this relieves me from the fear, that my present conduct should be imputed to interested motives. Indeed, such is the generosity of your own temper, that in any situation I should scarcely have reason to apprehend from you such a suspicion.

"The absolute impossibility of my forming at present a connexion with another will prevent you from imagining, that I am secretly influenced by sentiments different from those which I avow; nor can any weak doubts on this subject expose me to my own reproaches.

"You perceive, sir, that I am not willing utterly to lose your esteem, even when I renounce, in the most unequivocal man-

ner, all claim upon your affections. If any thing should appear to you harsh in this letter, I beg you to impute it to the real cause—my desire to spare you all painful suspense, by convincing you at once, that my determination is irrevocable. With sincere wishes for your happiness, I bid you farewell.

"BELINDA PORTMAN."

A few hours after Mr. Vincent had read this letter, he threw himself into a post-chaise, and set out for Germany. He saw that all hopes of being united to Belinda were over, and he hurried as far from her as possible. Her letter rather soothed than irritated his temper; her praises of his generosity were highly gratifying, and they had so powerful an effect upon his mind, that he was determined to prove that they were deserved. His conscience reproached him with not having made sufficiently honourable mention of Clarence Hervey's conduct, on the night when he was on the point of destroying himself. Before he left

London he wrote a full account of this whole transaction, to be given to miss Portman after his departure. It was delivered to Belinda by poor Juba, who would willingly have accompanied his unfortunate master in his voluntary exile, but Mr. Vincent would not permit him to give this proof of attachment.

"Go," said he, "to your wife, and to your happy home."

The poor fellow put his master's letter into miss Portman's hand, without being able to utter one syllable; the tears rolled down his black cheeks, when she kindly said to him—

"I shall see you again, Juba, soon, at your cottage."

"But massa will not be there—massa is gone!—When shall we see massa again? —Never—never!"

He sobbed like an infant.

No torments, in the power of human cruelty to inflict, could, in all probability, have extorted from this negro one of the

tears, which affection wrung from him so plentifully.

Belinda was deeply touched by this faithful creature's sensibility. He recalled to her mind some of the most amiable traits in his master's character, some of the happy days that she had spent in Mr. Vincent's company. His letter—his farewell letter—she could not read without great emotion. It was written with true feeling, but in a manly style, without one word of vain lamentation. His generosity, in speaking of Clarence Hervey, was not lost upon her.

"What a pity," thought Belinda, "that with so many good and great qualities, I should be forced to bid him adieu for ever!"

Though she strongly felt the pain of this separation, yet she could not recede from her decision: nothing could tempt her to connect herself with a man, who had the fatal taste for play. Even Mr. Percival, much as he loved his ward, much as he wished for his union with Belinda,

dared not pledge his honour for Mr. Vincent on this point.

Lady Anne Percival, in a very kind and sensible letter, expressed the highest approbation of Belinda's conduct; and the most polite and sincere hopes, that Belinda would still continue to think of her with affection and esteem; though she had been so rash in her advice, and though her friendship had been apparently so selfish.

CHAPTER XXX.

NEWS.

"Do not expect that I should pretend to be sorry for Mr. Vincent," said lady Delacour. "Let him be as generous and as penitent as he pleases, I am heartily glad that he is on his way to Germany. I dare say he will find in the upper or *lower* circles of the empire some heroine in the Kotzebue taste, who will alternately make him miserable, till he is happy; and happy- till he is miserable. He is one of those men who require great emotions— Fine lovers these make for stage effect!— but the worst husbands in the world!

"I hope, Belinda, you give me credit, for having judged better of Mr. Vincent than lady Anne Percival did?"

"For having judged worse of him, you mean? Lady Anne always judges *as well* as possible of every body."

"I will allow you to play upon words in a friend's defence, but do not be alarmed for the reputation of lady Anne's judgment. If it will be any satisfaction to you, I can with thorough sincerity assure you, that I never liked her so well in my life as since I have detected her in a mistake. It saves her, in my imagination, from the odium of being a perfect character."

"And there was something so handsome in her manner of writing to me, when she found out her errour," said Belinda——

"Very true, and my friend Mr. Percival behaved handsomely. Where friendships clash, it is not every man who has clearness of head sufficient to know his duty to his neighbour. Mr. Percival said no more than just the thing he ought, for his ward. You have reason to be obliged to him; and as we are returning thanks to all persons concerned in our deliverance from this imminent danger, Juba the

black and Solomon the Jew, ought to come in for their share; for without that wrestling match of theirs, the truth might never have been dragged to light, and Mr. Vincent would have been in due course of time your lord and master. But the danger is over; you need not look so terrified— Do not be like the man who dropped down dead with terrour, when he was shown by day light the broken bridge, which he had gallopped over in the dark."

Lady Delacour was in such high spirits, that, without regard to connexion, she ran on from one subject to another.

"You have proved to me, my dear," said she, "that you are not a girl to marry, because your wedding-gown was sent home, or because the day was fixed, or because *things had gone so far*. I give you infinite credit for your *civil courage*, as Dr. X—— calls it: military courage, as he said to me yesterday—military courage, that seeks the bubble reputation even in the cannon's mouth, may be had for sixpence a day. But civil

courage, such as enabled the princess Parizade, in the Arabian Tales, to go straight up the hill to her object, though the magical multitude of advising and abusive voices continually called to her to turn back, is one of the rarest qualities in man or woman, and not to be had for love, money, or admiration."

"You place admiration not only above money, but above love, in your climax, I perceive," said Belinda, smiling.

"I will give you leave to be as philosophically sarcastic as you please, my dear, if you will only smile, and if you will not look as pale as Seneca's Paulina, whose story we heard—from whom?"

"From Mr. Hervey, I believe."

"His name was ready upon your lips; I hope he was not far from your thoughts?"

"No one could be farther from my thoughts," said Belinda.

"Well, very likely—I believe it, because you say it; and because it is impossible."

"Rally me as much as you please, my

dear lady Delacour, I assure you, that I speak the simple truth."

"I cannot suspect you of affectation, my dear. Therefore honestly tell me, if Clarence Hervey were at your feet this instant, would you spurn him from you?"

"Spurn him! no—I would neither spurn him, nor *motion him from me*; but without using any of the terms in the heroine's dictionary—"

"You would refuse him?" interrupted lady Delacour, with a look of indignation—"you would refuse him?"

"I did not say so, I *believe*."

"You would accept him?"

"I did not say so, *I am sure*."

"O, you would tell him that you were not *accustomed* to him?"

"Not exactly in those words perhaps."

"Well, we shall not quarrel about words," said lady Delacour; "I only beg you to remember your own principles; and if ever you are put to the trial, be consistent. The first thing in a philosopher is to be consistent."

"Fortunately, for the credit of my philosophy, there is no immediate danger of it's being put to the test."

"Unfortunately, you surely mean; unless you are afraid that it might not stand the test. But I was going, when I spoke of consistency, to remind you, that all your own and Mr. Percival's arguments about *first loves* may now, with equal propriety, be turned against you."

"How *against* me?"

"They are evidently as applicable to second as to first loves, I think."

"Perhaps they are," said Belinda; "but I really and truly am not inclined to think of love at present: particularly as there is no necessity that I should."

Belinda took up a book, and lady Delacour for one half hour abstained from any farther raillery. But longer than half an hour she could not be silent on the subject uppermost in her thoughts.

"If Clarence Hervey," cried she, "were not the most honourable of blockheads, he might be the most happy of men. This

Virginia!—O, how I hate her!—I am sure poor Clarence cannot love her."

"Because you hate her—or because you hate her without having ever seen her?" said Belinda.

"O, I know what she must be," replied lady Delacour—"a soft, sighing, dying damsel, who puts bullfinches into her bosom. Smile, smile, my dear; you cannot help it: in spite of all your generosity, I know you must think as I do, and wish as I do, that she were at the bottom of the Black-sea this instant." Lady Delacour stood for some minutes musing, and then exclaimed, "I will move Heaven and Earth to break off this absurd match."

"Good Heavens, my dear lady Delacour, what do you mean?"

"Mean! my dear, I mean what I say, which very few people do: no wonder I should surprise you!"

"I conjure you," cried Belinda, "if you have the least regard for my honour and happiness "

"I have not the least, but the greatest; and depend upon it, my dear, I will do nothing that shall injure *that dignity of mind, and delicacy of character*, which I admire and love, as much as Clarence Hervey did, and does. Trust to me—not lady Anne Percival herself can be more delicate in her notions of propriety, than I am for my friends, and since my reformation, I hope I may add, for myself.—Fear nothing."—As she finished these words, she rang for her carriage. "I don't ask you to go out with me, my dear Belinda; I give you leave to sit in this arm chair, till I come back again, with your feet upon the fender, a book in your hand, and this little table beside you, like lady S.'s picture of Comfort."

Lady Delacour spent the rest of the morning abroad, and when she returned home, she gave no account of what she had been doing, or of what or whom she had seen. This was so unusual, that Belinda could not avoid taking notice of it. Notwithstanding her ladyship's eulogium upon

her own delicate sense of propriety, miss Portman could not confide, with perfect resignation, in her prudence.

"Your ladyship reproached me once," said she, in a playful tone, "for my provoking want of curiosity: you have completely cured me of this defect, for never was woman more curious than I am, at this instant, to know the secret scheme that you have in agitation."

"Have patience a little longer, and the mystery will be unravelled. In the mean time, trust that every thing I do is for the best. However, as you have behaved pretty well, I will give you one leading hint, when you have explained to me what you meant by saying, that your heart is not at present inclined to love? Pray have you quarrelled with love for ever?"

"No; but I can exist without it."

"Have you a heart?"

"I hope so."

"And it can exist without love? I now understand what was once said to me by

a foolish lordling :—' Of what use is the sun to the dial ?" *

Company came in, and relieved Belinda from any farther raillery. Lady Boucher and Mrs. Margaret Delacour were, amongst a large party, to dine at lady Delacour's. At dinner, the dowager seized the first auspicious moment of silence to announce a piece of intelligence, which she flattered herself would fix the eyes of all the world upon her.

"So Mr. Clarence Hervey is married at last !"

"Married !" cried lady Delacour—she had sufficient presence of mind not to look directly at Belinda ; but she fixed the dowager's eyes, by repeating—"married ! are you sure of it ?"

"Positive—positive ! He was privately married yesterday at his aunt, lady Almeria's apartments, at Windsor, to miss Hartley. I told you it was to be, and now it is over ; and a very extraordinary match

* A fact.

Mr. Hervey has made of it, after all. Think of his going, at last, and marrying a girl who has been his mistress for years! No body will visit her, to be sure. Lady Almeria is excessively distressed; she did all she could to prevail on her brother, the bishop, to marry his nephew, but he very properly refused, giving it as a reason, that the girl's character was too well known."

"I thought the bishop was at Spa," interposed a gentleman, whilst the dowager drew breath.

"O dear, no, sir; you have been misinformed," resumed she. "The bishop has been returned from Spa this great while, and he has refused to see his nephew, to my certain knowledge. After all, I cannot but pity poor Clarence for being driven into this match. Mr. Hartley has a prodigious fine fortune, to be sure, and he hurried things forward at an amazing rate, to patch up his daughter's reputation. He said, as I am credibly informed, yesterday morning, that if Clarence did not marry the girl be-

fore night, he would carry her and her fortune off the next day to the West Indies. Now the fortune was certainly an object."

"My dear lady Boucher," interrupted lord Delacour; "you must be misinformed in that particular: fortune is no object to Clarence Hervey; he is too generous a fellow to marry for fortune. What do you think—what do you say, lady Delacour?"

"I say, and think, and feel, as you do, my lord," said lady Delacour.

"You say, and think, and feel the same as my lord. Very extraordinary, indeed!" said the dowager. "Then if it were not for the sake of the fortune, pray why did Mr. Hervey marry at all? Can any body guess?"

"I should guess because he was in love," said lord Delacour, "for I remember, that was the reason I married myself."

"My dear good lord—but when I tell you the girl had been his mistress, till he was tired of her—"

"My lady Boucher," said Mrs. Marga-

ret Delacour, who had hitherto listened in silence—"my lady Boucher, you have been misinformed; miss Hartley never was Clarence Hervey's mistress."

"I'm mighty glad you think so, Mrs. Delacour; but I assure you, nobody else is so *charitable*. Those who live in the world hear a great deal more than those who live out of the world. I can promise you nobody will visit the bride, and that is the thing by which we are to judge."

Then the dowager and the rest of the company continued to descant upon the folly of the match. Those who wished to pay their court to lady Delacour were the loudest in their astonishment, at his throwing himself away in this manner. Her ladyship smiled, and kept them in play by her address, on purpose to withdraw all eyes from miss Portman, whilst, from time to time, she stole a glance at Belinda, to observe how she was affected by what passed: she was provoked by Belinda's self-possession. At last, when it had been settled that all the Herveys were *odd*, but

that this match of Clarence's was the *odd-est* of all the odd things, that any of the family had done for many generations, Mrs. Delacour calmly said:

"Are you sure, lady Boucher, that Mr. Hervey is married?"

"Positive! as I said before, positive! Madam, my woman had it from lady New-land's Swiss, who had it from lady Single-ton's Frenchwoman, who had it from Longueville, the hair-dresser, who had it from lady Almeria's own woman, who was present at the ceremony, and must know if any body does."

"The report has come to us zigzag as quick as lightning, yet it does not flash conviction upon me," said lady Delacour.

"Nor upon me," said Mrs. Delacour, "for this simple reason. I have seen miss Hartley, within these two hours, and I *had* it from herself, that she is not married."

"Not married!" cried the dowager, with terrour.

"I rather think not; she is now with her father, at my house, at dinner, I believe, and Clarence Hervey is at lady Almeria's,

at Windsor: her ladyship is confined by a fit of the gout, and sent for her nephew yesterday. If people who live out of the world hear less, they sometimes hear more correctly than those who live in it."

"Pray when does Mr. Hervey return from Windsor?" said the incorrigible dowager.

"To morrow, madam," said Mrs. Delacour. "As your ladyship is going to several parties this evening, I think it but *charitable* to set you right in these particulars, and I hope you will be so *charitable*, as to contradict the report of miss Hartley's having been Clarence's mistress."

"Why, as to that, if the young lady is not married, we must presume there are good reasons for it," said the dowager. "Pray on which side was the match broken off?"

"On neither side," answered Mrs. Delacour.

"The thing goes on then? and what day is the marriage to take place?" said lady Boucher.

"On Monday—or Tuesday—or Wed-

nesday—or Thursday—or Friday—or Saturday—or Sunday, I believe," replied Mrs. Delacour, who had the prudent art of giving answers effectually baffling to the curiosity of gossips.

The dowager consoled herself in her utmost need with a full plate of brandy peaches, and spoke not a word more during the second course. When the ladies retired after the desert, she again commenced hostilities: she dared not come to open war with Mrs. Delacour; but in a by-battle, in a corner, she carried every thing before her; and she triumphantly whispered, " We shall see, ma'am, that it will turn out, as I told you, that miss Rachel, or Virginia, or whatever he pleases to call her, has been what I said; and as I said, nobody will visit her, not a soul: fifty people I can count, who have declared to me they've made up their minds; and my own's made up, I candidly confess; and lady Delacour, I am sure by her silence and looks, is of my way of thinking, and has no opinion of the young

lady: as to miss Portman, she is, poor thing! of course so wrapped up in her own affairs, no wonder she says nothing. That was a sad business of Mr. Vincent's; I am surprised to see her look even as well as she does after it. Mr. Percival, I am told,"—said the well informed dowager, lowering her voice so much, that the lovers of scandal were obliged to close their heads round her—"Mr. Percival, I am informed, refused his consent to his ward, (who is not of age) on account of an anonymous letter, and it is supposed Mr. Vincent desired it for an excuse to get off handsomely. Fighting that duel, about her, with sir Philip Baddely, settled his love—so he is gone to Germany, and she is left to wear the willow, which, you see, becomes her as well as every thing else. Did she eat any dinner, ma'am—you sat next her?"

"Yes—more than I did, I am sure."

"Very extraordinary! Then perhaps sir Philip Baddely's *on* again—Lord bless me, what a match would that be for her! Why, Mrs. Stanhope might then, indeed, deserve

to be called the match-maker general. The seventh of her nieces this—But look, there's Mrs. Delacour, leading miss Portman off into the trictrac cabinet, with a face full of business—her hand in hers—Lord I did not know they were on that footing! I wonder what's going forward—suppose old Hartley was to propose for miss Portman—there would be a dénouement!—and cut his daughter off with a shilling! Nothing's impossible, you know. Did he ever see miss Portman? I must go, and find out, positively."

In the mean time, Mrs. Delacour, unconscious of the curiosity she had excited, was speaking to Belinda in the trictrac cabinet.

"My dear miss Portman," said she, "you have a great deal of good nature, else I should not venture to apply to you on the present occasion. Will you oblige me, and serve a friend of mine—a gentleman who, as I once imagined, was an admirer of yours?"

"I will do any thing in my power to

oblige any friend of yours, madam," said Belinda; "but of whom are you speaking?"

"Of Mr. Hervey, my dear young lady."

"He was never an admirer of mine," said Belinda colouring deeply; "but that does not make me the less disposed to serve him as a friend—tell me how it can possibly be in my power?"

"That you shall know immediately," said Mrs. Delacour, rummaging and rustling for a considerable time amongst a heap of letters, which she had pulled out of the largest pockets that ever woman wore, even in the last century.

"O, here it is," continued she, opening and looking into them. "May I trouble you just to look over this letter? It is from poor Mr. Hartley; he is, as you will see, excessively fond of his daughter, whom he has so fortunately discovered after his long search: he is dreadfully nervous, and has been terribly alarmed by these idle gossiping stories. You find, by what lady Boucher said at dinner, that they have settled it amongst them, that Virginia is

not a fit person to be visited; that she has been Clarence's mistress, instead of his pupil. Mr. Hartley, you see by this letter, is almost out of his senses with the apprehension, that his daughter's reputation is ruined. I sent my carriage to Twickenham, the moment I received this letter, for the poor girl, and her gouvernante. They came to me this morning; but what can I do?—I am only one old woman against a confederacy of veteran gossips; but if I could gain you and lady Delacour for my allies, I should fear no adversaries. Virginia is to stay with me for some days; and lady Delacour, I see, has a great mind to come to see her; but she does not like to come without you, and she says, that she does not like to ask you to accompany her. I don't understand her delicacy about the matter; I have none, believing, as I do, that there is no foundation whatever for these malicious reports, which, *entre nous*, originated, I fancy, with Mrs. Marriott. Now, will you oblige me? If you and lady Delacour will come,

and see Virginia to morrow, all the world would follow your example the next day. It's often cowardice that makes people ill natured; have you the courage, my good miss Portman, to be the first to do a benevolent action? I do assure you," continued Mrs. Delacour with great earnestness—"I do assure you, I would as soon put my hand into that fire, this moment, as ask you to do any thing that I thought improper—But forgive me for pressing this point; I am anxious to have your suffrage in her favour: miss Belinda Portman's character for prudence and propriety stands so high, and is fixed so firmly, that she may venture to let us cling to it; and I am as firmly convinced of the poor girl's innocence, as I am of yours, and when you see her, you will be of my opinion."

"I assure you, Mrs. Delacour," said Belinda, "that you have wasted a great deal of eloquence upon this occasion, for—"

"I am sorry for it," interrupted Mrs. Delacour, rising from her seat, with a look of some displeasure, "I meant not to distress

or offend you, miss Portman, by *my eloquence*—I am only concerned, that I should have so far mistaken your character as to expose myself to this refusal."

"I have given no refusal," said Belinda mildly, "you did not let me finish my sentence."

"I beg pardon, that is a foolish old trick of mine."

"Mrs. Delacour, I was going to say, has wasted a great deal of eloquence: for I am entirely of her opinion, and I shall with the greatest readiness comply with her request."

"You are a charming generous girl, and I am a passionate old fool—thank you a thousand times."

"You are not at all obliged to me," said Belinda. "When I first heard this story, I believed it, as lady Boucher now does—but I have had reason to alter my opinion, and perhaps the same means of information would have changed hers; once convinced, it is impossible to relapse into suspicion."

"Impossible to *you*—the most truly virtuous women are always the least suspicious and uncharitable in their opinion of their own sex. Lady Anne Percival inspired me with this belief, and miss Portman confirms it.—I admire your courage in daring to come forward in the defence of innocence. I am very rude, alas! for praising you so much."

"I have not a right to your admiration," said Belinda, "for I must honestly confess to you, that I should not have this courage, if there were any danger in the case; I do not think, that, in doubtful cases, it is the business of a young woman to hazard her own reputation, by an attempt to preserve another's: I do not imagine, at least, that I am of sufficient consequence in the world, for this purpose; therefore I should never attempt it. It is the duty of such women as Mrs. Delacour, whose reputations are beyond the power of scandal, to come forward in the defence of injured innocence; but this would not be courage in

Belinda Portman, it would be presumption and temerity."

"Well, if you will not let me admire your courage, or your generosity, or your prudence," said Mrs. Delacour laughing, "you must positively let me admire *you* altogether, and love you too, for I cannot help it. Farewell."

After the company was gone, lady Delacour was much surprised by the earnestness, with which Belinda pressed the request that they might the next morning pay a visit to Virginia.

"My dear," said lady Delacour, "to tell you the truth, I am full of curiosity, and excessively anxious to go. I hesitated, merely on your account; I fancied that you would not like the visit, and that if I went without you, it might be taken notice of.—But I am delighted to find that you will come with me; I can only say, that you have more generosity, than I should have in the same situation."

The next morning they went together to Mrs. Delacour's. In their way thither

Belinda, to divert her own thoughts, and to rouse lady Delacour from the profound and unnatural silence, into which she had fallen, petitioned her to finish the history of sir Philip Baddely, the dog, miss Annabella Luttridge, and her billet-doux.

"For some of my high crimes and misdemeanours, you vowed that you would not tell me the remainder of the story, till the whole week had elapsed; now will you satisfy my curiosity? You recollect that you left off just where you said, that you were come to the best part of the story."

"Was I? did I?—Very true, we shall have time enough to finish it by and by, my dear," said lady Delacour; "at present my poor head is running upon something else, and I have left off being an accomplished actress, or I could talk of one subject and think of another, as well as the best of you. Stop the carriage, my dear, I am afraid they have forgot my orders."

"Did you carry what I desired this morn-

ing to Mrs. Delacour?" said her ladyship to one of her footmen.

"I did my lady."

"And did you say from me, that it was not to be opened, till I came?"

"Yes, my lady."

"Where did you leave it?"

"In Mrs. Delacour's dressingroom, my lady:—she desired me to take it up there, and she locked the door, and said no one should go in, till you came."

"Very well—go on—Belinda, my dear, I hope that I have worked up your curiosity to the highest pitch."

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE DENOUEMENT.

CURIOSITY was not, at this instant, the strongest passion in Belinda's mind. When the carriage stopped at Mrs. Delacour's door, her heart almost ceased to beat; but she summoned resolution to go through, with firmness and dignity, the task she had undertaken.

Clarence Hervey was not in the room when they entered, nor was Virginia: Mrs. Ormond said, that she had been extremely feverish during the night, and that she had advised her not to get up, till late in the day. But Mrs. Delacour immediately went for her, and in a few minutes she made her appearance.

Belinda and lady Delacour exchanged a glance of surprise and admiration. There

was a grace and simplicity in her manner, joined to an air of naïveté, that made an irresistible impression in her favour. Lady Delacour, however, after the first surprise was over, seemed to relapse into her former opinion; and the piercing looks, which her ladyship from time to time cast upon Virginia as she spoke, produced their effect. She was abashed and silent. Belinda endeavoured to engage her in conversation, and to her she talked with ease, and even with freedom. Virginia examined miss Portman's countenance with a species of artless curiosity and interest, that was not restrained by factitious politeness. This examination was not peculiarly agreeable to Belinda, yet it was made with so much apparent simplicity, that she could not be displeased.

On the first pause in the conversation, Mrs. Delacour said, "Pray, my dear lady Delacour, what is this wonderful present that you sent to me this morning, which you desired that no one should see, till you came?"

"I cannot satisfy your curiosity yet," replied lady Delacour. "I must wait till Clarence Hervey comes, for the present is intended for him."

An air of solemn mystery in her ladyship's manner, as she pronounced these words, excited general attention. There was a dead silence, which lasted several minutes: some feeble attempts were then made by each of the company, to start a fresh subject of conversation; but it would not do—all relapsed into the silence of expectation. At last, Clarence Hervey arrived. Belinda rejoiced, that the universal curiosity, which lady Delacour had inspired, prevented any one's observing the sudden change in Mr. Hervey's countenance, when he beheld her.

"A pretty set of curious children you are!" cried lady Delacour, laughing. "Do you know, Clarence, that they are all dying with impatience, to see *un gage d'amitié* that I have brought for you; and the reason that they are so curious is simply, because I had the address to say,

in a solemn voice, 'I cannot satisfy your curiosity, till Clarence Hervey arrives.' Now, follow me, my friends; and if you be disappointed, lay the blame not on me, but on your own imaginations."

She led the way to Mrs. Delacour's dressing-room, and all the company followed.

"Now, what do you expect to see?" said she, putting the key into the door.

After waiting some moments for a reply, but in vain, she threw open the door, and they saw, hung before the wall opposite to them, a green curtain.

"I thought, my dear Clarence," resumed lady Delacour, "that no present could be more agreeable to you, than a companion for your Virginia. Does this figure," continued she, drawing back the curtain—"does this figure give you the idea of Paul?"

"Paul!" said Clarence: "it is a naval officer in full uniform: what can your ladyship mean?"

"Virginia perhaps will know what I

mean, if you will only stand out of her way, and let her see the picture."

At these words Clarence made way for Virginia: she turned her eyes upon the picture—uttered a piercing shriek, and fell senseless upon the floor.

"Take it coolly," said lady Delacour, "and she will come to her senses presently. Young ladies must shriek and faint upon certain occasions; but men (looking at Clarence Hervey) need not always be dupes. This is only a *scene*; consider it as such, and admire the actress as I do."

"Actress! O, she is no actress!" cried Mrs. Ormond.

Clarence Hervey raised her from the ground, and Belinda sprinkled water over her face.

"She's dead!—she's dead! O, my sweet child! she's dead!" exclaimed Mrs. Ormond, trembling so violently, that she could not sustain Virginia's weight.

"She is no actress, indeed," said Clarence Hervey; "her pulse is gone!"

Lady Delacour looked at Virginia's pale

lips, touched her cold hands, and with a look of horrour, cried out, "Good Heavens! what have I done? What shall we do with her?"

"Give her air—give her air, air, air!" cried Belinda.

"You keep the air from her, Mrs. Ormond," said Mrs. Delacour. "Let us leave her to miss Portman; she has more presence of mind than any of us." And as she spoke, she forced Mrs. Ormond away with her out of the room.

"If Mr. Hartley should come, keep him with you, Mrs. Delacour," said Clarence Hervey. "Is her pulse quite gone?"

"No; it beats stronger and stronger," said Belinda.

"Her colour is returning," said lady Delacour. "There! raise her a little, dear Belinda; she is coming to herself."

"Had not you better draw the curtain again before that picture," said miss Portman; "lest she should see it, the moment she opens her eyes?"

Virginia came slowly to her recollection,

saw lady Delacour drawing the curtain before the picture, then fixed her eyes upon Clarence Hervey, without uttering a word.

"Are you better now?" said he, in a gentle tone.

"O, do not speak—do not look so kindly!" cried Virginia. "I am well—quite well—better than I deserve to be"—and she pressed Belinda's hand, as if to thank her for assisting and supporting her.

"We may safely leave her now," whispered Belinda to lady Delacour; "we are strangers, and our presence only distresses her."

They withdrew. But the moment Virginia found herself alone with Mr. Hervey, she was seized with a universal tremour; she tried to speak, but could not articulate. At last, she burst into a flood of tears; and when this had in some measure relieved her, she threw herself upon her knees, and clasping her hands, exclaimed, as she looked up to Heaven—

"O, if I knew what I ought to do!—if I knew what I ought to say!——"

"Shall I tell you, Virginia? And will you believe me?"

"Yes, yes, yes!"

"You ought to say—the truth—whatever it may be."

"But you will think me the most ungrateful of human beings?"

"How often must I assure you, Virginia, that I make no claim upon your gratitude. Speak to me—I conjure you, as you value your happiness and mine—speak to me without disguise! What is all this mystery? Why should you fear to let me know what passes in your heart? Why did you shriek at the sight of that picture?"

"O, forgive me! forgive me!" cried Virginia; she would have sunk at his feet, if he had not prevented her.

"I will—I can forgive any thing, but deceit. Do not look at me with so much terrour, Virginia—I have not deserved it —my wish is to make you happy—I would sacrifice even my own happiness, to secure yours—but do not mislead me, or you ruin

us both. Cannot you give me a distinct answer to this simple question?—Why did you shriek at the sight of that picture?"

"Because—but you will call me '*perfidious, ungrateful Virginia!*'—because I have seen that figure—he has knelt to me—he has kissed my hand—and I—"

Clarence Hervey withdrew his arms, which had supported her, and placing her upon a sofa, left her, whilst he walked up and down the room for some minutes, in silence.

"And why, Virginia," said he, stopping short, "was it necessary to conceal all this from me? Why was it necessary to persuade me that I was beloved? Why was it necessary that my happiness should be the sacrifice?"

"It shall not!—it shall not! Your happiness shall not be the sacrifice. Heaven is my witness, that there is no sacrifice I would not make for you. Forgive me that shriek! I could not help fainting indeed! But I will be yours; I *ought* to be yours; and I am not perfidious, I am

not ungrateful; do not look upon me as you did in my dream!"

"Do not talk to me of dreams, my dear Virginia; this is no time for trifling; I ask no sacrifice from you, I ask nothing but truth."

"Truth! Mrs. Ormond knows all the truth. I have concealed nothing from her."

"But she has concealed every thing from me," cried Clarence; and, with a sudden impulse of indignation, he was going to summon her: but when his hand was upon the lock of the door, he paused, returned to Virginia, and said, "Let me hear the truth from *your* lips: it is all I shall ever ask from you. How!—when!—where did you see this man?"

"What man?" said Virginia, looking up, with the simple expression of innocence in her countenance.

Clarence pointed to the picture.

"At the village in the New Forest, at Mrs. Smith's house," said Virginia, "one

evening when I walked with her from my grandmother's cottage."

"And your grandmother knew of this?"

"Yes," said Virginia, blushing, "and she was very much displeased.

"And Mrs. Ormond knew of this?" pursued Clarence.

"Yes; but she told me that you would no be displeased at it."

Mr. Hervey made another hasty step toward the door, but restraining his impetuous temper, he again stopped, and, leaning over the back of a chair, opposite to Virginia, waited in silence for her to proceed.—He waited in vain.

"I do not mean to distress you, miss Hartley," said he.

She burst into tears.—"I knew, I knew," cried she, "that you *would* be displeased; I told Mrs. Ormond so. I knew you would never forgive me."

"In that you were mistaken," said Clarence, mildly; "I forgive you without difficulty, as I hope you may forgive

yourself; nor can it be my wish to extort from you any mortifying confessions. But, perhaps, it may yet be in my power to serve you, if you will trust to me. I will myself speak to your father. I will do every thing to secure to you the object of your affections, if you will, in this last moment of our connexion, treat me with sincerity, and suffer me to be your friend."

Virginia sobbed so violently for some time, that she could not speak—at last she said—

"You are—you are—the most generous of men! You have always been my *best* friend! I am the most ungrateful of human beings! But I am sure I never wished, I never intended, to deceive you. Mrs. Ormond told me——"

"Do not speak of her at present, or perhaps I may lose my temper," interrupted Clarence in an altered voice, "only tell me, I conjure you—tell me, in one word, who is this man? and where is he to be found?"

"I do not know. I do not understand you," said Virginia.

"You do not know!—You will not

trust me—Then I must leave you to—to Mr. Hartley."

"Do not leave me—O, do not leave me in anger!" cried Virginia, clinging to him—"Not trust you!—I!—not trust you—O, what *can* you mean? I have no confessions to make! Mrs. Ormond knows every thought of my mind, and so shall you, if you will only hear me. I do not know who this man is, I assure you; nor where he is to be found."

"And yet you love him? Can you love a man whom you do not know, Virginia?"

"I only love his figure, I believe," said Virginia.

"His figure!"

"Indeed I am quite bewildered," said Virginia, looking round wildly; "I know not what I feel."

"If you permitted this man to kneel to you, to kiss your hand, surely you must know that you love him, Virginia?"

"But that was only in a dream; and Mrs. Ormond said——"

"Only a dream! But you met him at Mrs. Smith's, in the New Forest?"

"That was only a picture."

"Only a picture!—but you have seen the original?"

"Never—never in my life; and I wish to Heaven I had never, never seen that fatal picture! the image haunts me day and night. When I read of heroes in the day, that figure rises to my view, instead of yours. When I go to sleep at night, I see it, instead of yours, in my dreams; it speaks to me, it kneels to me. I long ago told Mrs. Ormond this, but she laughed at me. I told her of that frightful dream. I saw you weltering in your blood; I tried to save you, but could not. I heard you say, 'Perfidious, ungrateful Virginia! you are the cause of my death!' Oh, it was the most dreadful night I ever passed! Still this figure, this picture, was before me; and he was the knight of the white plumes; and it was he who stabbed you: but when I wished him to be victorious, I did not

know that he was fighting against you. So Mrs. Ormond told me, that I need not blame myself; and she said, that you were not so foolish as to be jealous of a picture; but I knew you would be displeased— I knew you would think me ungrateful— I knew you would never forgive me."

Whilst Virginia rapidly uttered all this, Clarence marked the wild animation of her eyes, the sudden changes of her countenance; he recollected her father's insanity; every feeling of his mind gave way to terrour and pity; he approached her with all the calmness that he could assume, took both her hands, and holding them in his, said, in a soothing voice—

"My dear Virginia! you are not ungrateful. I do not think you so. I am not displeased with you. You have done nothing to displease me. Compose yourself, dear Virginia."

"I am quite composed, now you again call me dear Virginia. Only I am afraid, as I always told Mrs. Ormond, that I do not love you *enough*; but she said, that

I did, and that my thinking so was the strongest proof of my affection."

Virginia now spoke in so consistent a manner, that Clarence could not doubt, that she was in the clear possession of her understanding. She repeated to him all that she had said to Mrs. Ormond; and he began to hope, that, without any intention to deceive, Mrs. Ormond's ignorance of the human heart led her into a belief, that Virginia was in love with him; whilst, in fact, her imagination, exalted by solitude and romance, embodied, and became enamoured of a plantom.

"I always told Mrs. Ormond, that she was mistaken," said Clarence. "I never believed, that you loved me, Virginia, till—— (he paused, and carefully examined her countenance)—till you yourself gave me reason to think so. Was it only a principle of gratitude, then, that dictated your answer to my letter?"

She looked irresolute: and at last, in a low voice, said——

"If I could see, if I could speak to Mrs. Ormond—"

"She cannot tell what are the secret feelings of your heart, Virginia. Consult no Mrs. Ormond. Consult no human creature but yourself."

"But Mrs. Ormond told me, that you loved me, and that you had educated me to be your wife."

Mr. Hervey made an involuntary exclamation against Mrs. Ormond's folly.

"How, then, can you be happy," continued Virginia, "if I am so ungrateful as to say I do not love you? That I do not *love* you!—O! *that* I cannot say; for I do love you, better than any one living, except my father, and with the same sort of affection that I feel for him. You ask me to tell you the secret feelings of my heart.—The only secret feeling, of which I am conscious, is—a wish not to marry, unless I could see in reality such a person as ——But that I knew was only a picture, a dream; and I thought, that I ought at least to sacrifice my foolish imaginations to you, who have done so much for me.

I knew that it would be the height of ingratitude to refuse you; and besides, my father told me, that you would not accept of my fortune without my hand, so I consented to marry you: forgive me, if these were wrong motives, I thought them right. Only tell me what I can do to make you happy, as I am sure I wish to do; to that wish I would sacrifice every other feeling."

"Sacrifice nothing, dear Virginia. We may both be happy without making any sacrifice of our feelings," cried Clarence. And, transported at regaining his own freedom, Virginia's simplicity never appeared to him so charming as at this moment.—"Dearest Virginia, forgive me for suspecting you for one instant of any thing unhandsome. Mrs. Ormond, with the very best intentions possible, has led us both to the brink of misery. But I find you such as I always thought you, ingenuous, affectionate, innocent."

"And you are not angry with me?" interrupted Virginia, with joyful eagerness, "and you will not think me ungrateful?

And you will not be unhappy? And Mrs. Ormond was mistaken? And you do not wish that I should *love* you, that I should be your wife I mean? O, don't deceive me, for I cannot help believing whatever you say."

Clarence Hervey, to give her a convincing proof, that Mrs. Ormond had misled her as to his sentiments, immediately avowed his passion for Belinda.

"You have relieved me from all doubt, all fear, all anxiety," said Virginia, with the sweetest expression of innocent affection in her countenance. "May you be as happy as you deserve to be! May Belinda—is not that her name?—May Belinda——"

At this moment lady Delacour half opened the door, exclaiming—

"Human patience can wait no longer!"

"Will you trust me to explain for you, dear Virginia?" said Clarence.

"Most willingly," said Virginia, retiring as lady Delacour advanced. "Pray leave me here alone, whilst you, who are

used to talk before strangers, speak for me."

"Dare you venture, Clarence," said her ladyship, as she closed the door, "to leave her alone with that picture? You are no lover, if you be not jealous."

"I am not jealous," said Clarence, "yet I am a lover—a passionate lover."

"A passionate lover!" cried lady Delacour, stopping short as they were crossing the antichamber;—"then I have done nothing but mischief. In love with Virginia?—I will not—cannot believe it."

"In love with Belinda!—Cannot you, will not you believe it?"

"My dear Clarence, I never doubted it for an instant. But are you at liberty to own it to any body but me?"

"I am at liberty to declare it to all the world."

"You transport me with joy! I will not keep you from her a second. But stay—I am sorry to tell you, that, as she informed me this morning, *her heart is not*

at present inclined to love. And there are half a dozen poor wretches in this room dying with curiosity. Curiosity is as ardent as love, and has as good a claim to compassion."

As he entered the room, Clarence Hervey's first glance was at Belinda, and rapid as it was, it explained his heart.

Regardless of the spectators, he hurried to her, seized her hand, and in the most passionate terms declared, that from the moment he had discovered her real character, at the masquerade at lady Singleton's his whole soul had been hers.

Belinda put her arm within lady Delacour's, trembling so that she could scarcely stand. Lady Delacour pressed her hand, and was perfectly silent.

" And miss Portman is to believe this," cried Mrs. Margaret Delacour, " when she has seen you on the very eve of marriage with another lady ?"

" The strongest merit I can plead with such a woman as miss Portman is, that I was ready to sacrifice my own hap-

piness to a sense of duty. Now that I am at liberty——"

"Now that you are at liberty," interrupted lady Delacour, you are in a vast hurry to offer your whole soul to a lady, who has for months seen all your merits with perfect insensibility, and who has been, notwithstanding all my operations, stone blind to your love."

"The struggles of my passion cannot totally have escaped Belinda's penetration,' said Clarence—"But I like her a thousand times the better for not having trusted merely to appearances. That love is most to be valued, which cannot be easily won. In my opinion, there is a prodigious difference between a warm imagination and a warm heart."

"Well," said lady Delacour, "we have all of us seen *Pamela maritata*—let us now see *Belinda in love*, if that be possible. —*If!*—forgive me this last stroke of raillery, my dear—in spite of all my raillery, I do believe, that the prudent Belinda is more capable of feeling real per-

manent passion, than any of the dear sentimental young ladies, whose motto is—

" All for love, or the world well lost."

" That is just my opinion," said Mrs. Margaret Delacour. " But, pray, what is become of Mr. Hartley?" looking round—" I do not see him."

" No: for I have hid him," said lady Delacour; " he shall be forthcoming presently."

" Dear Mr. Clarence Hervey, what have you done with my Virginia?" said Mrs. Ormond.

" Dear Mrs. Ormond, what have *you* done with her?" replied Clarence. " By your mistaken kindness, by insisting upon doing us both good against our wills, you were very near making us both miserable for life. But I blame nobody, I have no right to blame any one so much as myself. All this has arisen from my own presumption and imprudence. Nothing could be more absurd than my

scheme of educating a woman in solitude to make her fit for society. I might have foreseen what must happen, that Virginia would consider me as her tutor, her father, not as her lover, or her husband; that with the most affectionate of hearts, she could for me feel nothing but *gratitude.*"

"Nothing but gratitude!" repeated Mrs. Ormond, with a degree of amazement in her countenance, which made every body present smile: "I am sure I thought she was dying for love of you."

"My dear Belinda," whispered lady Delacour, "if I might judge of the colour of this cheek, which has been for some moments permanent crimson, I should guess, that you were beginning to find out *of what use the sun is to the dial.*"

"You will not let me hear what Mr. Hervey is saying," replied Belinda; "I am very curious."

"Curiosity is a stronger passion than love, as I told him just now," said lady Delacour.

In spite of all his explanations, Mrs.

Ormond could not be made to comprehend Virginia's feelings. She continually repeated——

"But it is impossible for Virginia, or for any body, to be in love with a picture."

"It is not said that she is in love with a picture," replied Mrs. Delacour, "though even for that I could find you a precedent."

"My dear lady Delacour," said Mrs. Ormond, "will you explain to us how that picture came into your possession, and how it came here, and, in short, all that is to be known about it?"

"Ay, explain! explain! my dear lady Delacour," cried Mrs. Delacour—"I am afraid I am grown almost as curious as my lady Boucher. Explain! explain!"

"Most willingly," said lady Delacour. "To Marriott's ruling passion for birds you are all of you indebted for this discovery. A few weeks ago, whilst we were at Twickenham, as Marriott was waiting at a stationer's, to bid her last adieus to a

bullfinch, a gentleman came into the shop where she and Bobby (as she calls this bird) were coquetting, and the gentleman was struck even more than Marriott with the bullfinch. He went almost distracted on hearing a particular tune, which this bird sung. I suspected, from the symptoms, that the gentleman must be, or must have been, in love with the bullfinch's mistress. Now the bullfinch was traced home to the ci-devant Virginia St. Pierre, the present miss Hartley. I had my reasons for being curious about her loves and lovers, and as soon as I learned the story from Marriott, I determined, if possible, to find out who this stranger, with the strange passion for bullfinches, might be. I questioned and cross-questioned all those people at the stationer's who were present, when he fell into extacies; and from the shopman, who had been bribed to secrecy, I learned that our gentleman returned to the stationer's the day after he met Marriott, and watched till he obtained a sight of Virginia, as she

came to her window. Now it was believed by the girl of this shop, who had lived for some time with Mrs. Ormond——Forgive me, Mr. Hervey, for what I am going to say—forgive me, Mrs. Ormond—scandal, like death, is common to all.——It was believed that Virginia was Mr. Hervey's mistress. My stranger no sooner learnt this, than he swore that he would think of her no more, and after bestowing a variety of seamen's execrations upon the villain who had seduced his heavenly creature, he departed from Twickenham, and was no more seen or heard of. My inquiries after him were indefatigable, but for some time unsuccessful. And so they might have continued, and we might have been all making one another unhappy at this moment, if it had not been for Mr. Vincent's great dog Juba—miss Annabella Luttridge's billet-doux—sir Philip Baddely's insolence—my lord Delacour's belief in a quack balsam—and captain Sunderland's humanity."

"Captain Sunderland! who is captain Sunderland? we never heard of him before," cried Mrs. Ormond.

"You shall hear of him just as I did, if you please," said lady Delacour, "and if Belinda will submit to hear me tell the same story twice."

Here her ladyship repeated the history of the battle of the dogs; and of sir Philip Baddely's knocking down Juba the man, for struggling in defence of Juba the dog.

"Now the gentleman, who assisted my lord Delacour in bringing the disabled negro across the square to our house, was captain Sunderland. My lord summoned Marriott to produce lady Boucher's infallible balsam, that it might be tried upon Juba's sprained ankle. Whilst my lord was intent upon the balsam, Marriott was intent upon captain Sunderland. She recollected, that she had met him somewhere before, and the moment he spoke, she knew him to be the gentleman, who had fallen into extacies, in the shop at

Twickenham, about the bullfinch. Marriott hastened to me with the news; I hastened to my lord, made him introduce captain Sunderland to me, and I never rested, till he had told me all that I wanted to know. Some years ago, just before he went to sea, he paid a visit to his mother, who then lodged with a widow Smith, in the New Forest. Whilst he was there, he heard of the young beauty who lived in the Forest, with a grandmother, who was *not a little particular*; and who would not permit any body to see her.

"My captain's curiosity was excited; one day, unseen by the duenna, he obtained a distinct view of Virginia, watering her roses and tending her bees. Struck with her uncommon beauty, he approached carefully to the thicket in which the cottage was enclosed, and found a *lair*, where he concealed himself, day after day, and contemplated at leisure the budding charms of the fair woodnymph. In short, he became so enamoured, that he was determined to gain admittance at the cottage,

and declare his passion: but to his honour be it told, that when the history of the poor girl's mother, and the situation and fears of the old lady, who was her only friend, were known to him, in consideration of the extreme youth of the ward, and the extreme age of her guardian, he determined to defer his addresses, till his return from the West-Indies, whither he was shortly to sail, and where he had hopes of making a fortune, that might put him in a situation to render the object of his affections independent. He left a bullfinch with Mrs. Smith, who gave it to Virginia, without telling to whom it had belonged, lest her grandmother might be displeased.

"I really thought, that all this showed too nice a moral sense for a young dashing lieutenant in the navy, and I was persuaded, that my gentleman was only keeping his mistress's secret like a man of honour. With this belief, I regretted, that Clarence Hervey should throw himself away upon a girl, who was unworthy of him."

"I hope," interrupted Clarence, "you are perfectly convinced of your mistake."

"Perfectly! perfectly!—I am convinced that Virginia is only half mad. But let me go on with my story. I was determined to discover whether she had any remains of affection for this captain. It was in vain he assured me, that she had never seen him. I prevailed upon him to let me go on my own way. I inquired whether he had ever had his picture drawn. —Yes, he had for his mother, just when he first went out to sea. It had been left at the widow Smith's.—I begged him to procure it for me.—He told me it was impossible.—I told him I trampled on impossibilities.—In short he got the picture for me as you see. 'Now,' thought I, 'if he speaks the truth, Virginia will see this picture without emotion, and it will only seem to be a present for Clarence. But if she had ever seen him before, or had any secret to conceal, she will betray herself on the sudden appearance of this

picture.' Things have turned out contrary to all my expectations, and yet better.——And now, Clarence, I must beg you will prevail on miss Hartley to appear, I can go on no farther without her."

Lady Delacour took Virginia by the hand, the moment she entered the room.

"Will you trust yourself with me, miss Hartley?" said she; "I have made you faint once to day by the sight of a picture; will you promise me not to faint again, when I produce the original?"

"The original!" said Virginia—"I will trust myself with you, for I am sure you cannot mean to laugh at me, though, perhaps, I deserve to be laughed at."

Lady Delacour threw open the door of another apartment. Mr. Hartley appeared, and with him captain Sunderland.

"My dear daughter," said Mr. Hartley, "give me leave to introduce to you a friend, to whom I owe more obligations than to any man living, except to Mr. Hervey. This gentleman was stationed some years ago at Jamaica, and in a re

bellion of the negroes on my plantation he saved my life. Fortune has accidentally thrown my benefactor in my way. To show my sense of my obligations, is out of my power."

Virginia's surprise was extreme; her vivid dreams, the fond wishes of her waking fancy, were at once accomplished. For the first moment, she gazed as on an animated picture, and all the ideas of love and romance, associated with this image, rushed upon her mind.

But when the realities, by which she was surrounded, dispelled the illusion, she suddenly withdrew her eyes, and blushed deeply, with such timid and graceful modesty as charmed every body present.

Captain Sunderland pressed forward but was stopped by lady Delacour.

"Avaunt! thou real lover!" cried she—"None but the shadow of a man can hope to approach the visionary maid. In vain has Marraton forced his way through the bushes and briars, in vain has he braved the apparition of the lion, there is yet a

phantom barrier apparently impassable between him and his Yaratilda, for he is in the world of shadows. Now mark me, Marraton, hurry not this delicate spirit, or perchance you frighten and lose her for ever; but have patience, and gradually and gracefully she will venture into your world of realities—Only give her time."

"Time! O yes, give me time," cried Virginia shrinking back.

"My dear miss Hartley," continued lady Delacour, "in plain prose, to prevent all difficulties and embarrassments, I must inform you, that captain Sunderland will not insist upon prompt payment of your father's debt of gratitude: he has but one quarter of an hour to spend with us, he is actually under sailing orders, and he must be absent for some weeks, so that you will have time to become accustomed to the idea of a new lover, before his return. Clarence, I advise you to accompany captain Sunderland on this cruise; don't you, Belinda?"

"And now, my good friends," conti-

nued lady Delacour, "shall I finish the novel for you?"

"If your ladyship pleases; nobody can do it better," said Clarence Hervey.

"But I hope you will remember, dear lady Delacour," said Belinda, "that there is nothing in which novellists are so apt to err, as in hurrying things toward the conclusion. In not allowing *time* enough for that change of feeling, which change of situation cannot instantly produce."

"That's right, my dear Belinda, true to your principles to the last gasp. Fear nothing—you shall have *time* enough to become accustomed to Clarence. Would you choose that I should draw out the story to five volumes more? With your advice and assistance, I can, with the greatest ease, my dear.—A declaration of love, you know is only the beginning of things; there may be blushes, and sighs, and doubts, and fears, and misunderstandings, and jealousies without end or common sense, to fill up the necessary space, and

to gain the necessary *time*; but if I might conclude the business in two lines, I should say,

'Ye Gods, annihilate both space and time,
'And make four lovers happy."

"O, that would be cutting matters too short," said Mrs. Margaret Delacour. "I am of the old school, and though I could dispense with the description of miss Harriet Byron's worked chairs and fine china, yet I own, I like to hear something of the preparation for a marriage, as well as of the mere wedding. I like to hear *how* people become happy in a rational manner, better than to be told in the huddled style of an old fairy tale—*and so they were all married, and they lived very happily all the rest of their days.*"

"We are not in much danger of hearing such an account of modern marriages," said lady Delacour.—"But how shall I

please you all?—Some people cry—'Tell me every thing'—Others say, that,

'Le secret d'ennuyer est celui de tout dire.'

"Something must be left to the imagination. Positively I will not describe wedding dresses, or a procession to church. I have no objection to saying, that the happy couples were united by the worthy Mr. Moreton; that Mr. Percival gave Belinda away; and that immediately after the ceremony, he took the whole party down with him to Oakly-park.—Will this do?—Or, we may conclude, if you like it better, with a characteristic letter of congratulation from Mrs. Stanhope to her *dearest* niece, Belinda, acknowledging that she was wrong to quarrel with her, for refusing sir Philip Baddely, and giving her infinite credit for that admirable *management* of Clarence Hervey, which she hopes will continue through life."

"Well, I have no objection to ending with a letter," said Mrs. Delacour, "for last speeches are always tiresome."

"Yes," said her ladyship; "it is so difficult, as the critic says, to get lovers off upon their knees. Now I think of it let me place you all in proper attitudes for stage effect. What signifies being happy, unless we appear so?—Captain Sunderland—kneeling with Virginia, if you please, sir, at her father's feet—You in the act of giving them your blessing, Mr. Hartley—Mrs. Ormond clasps her hands with joy—Nothing can be better than that, madam—I give you infinite credit for the attitude—Clarence, you have a right to Belinda's hand, and may kiss it too—Nay, miss Portman, it is the rule of the stage—Now, where's my lord Delacour?—He should be embracing me, to show that we are reconciled—Ha! here he comes—Enter lord Delacour, with little Helena in his hand—Very well! a good start of surprise, my lord—Stand still, pray, you cannot be better than you are—Helena, my love, do not let go your father's hand—There! quite pretty and na-

tural!—Now, lady Delacour, to show that she is reformed, comes forward to address the audience with a moral—a moral!—yes

"Our *tale* contains a *moral*, and, no doubt,
"You all have wit enough to find it out."

THE END.

yer, Printer, Bridge Street, Blackfriars, London.